

Weekly Compilation of  
**Presidential  
Documents**



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**Editor's Note:** The President was at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, on February 29, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

## WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

## PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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Week Ending Friday, February 29, 2008

### **The President's Radio Address**

*February 23, 2008*

Good morning. This Thursday, Laura and I returned from an inspiring visit to Africa. In Benin and Tanzania, we met leaders who are fighting HIV/AIDS and malaria and people whose lives have been saved by the generosity of the American people. In Rwanda, we saw a nation overcoming the pain of genocide with courage and grace and hope. In Ghana, we met entrepreneurs who are exporting their products and building a more prosperous future. And in Liberia, we saw a nation that is recovering from civil war, led by the first democratically elected woman President on the continent. Laura and I returned to Washington impressed by the energy, optimism, and potential of the African people.

Members of Congress will soon be returning to Washington as well, and they have urgent business to attend to. They left town on a 10-day recess without passing vital legislation giving our intelligence professionals the tools they need to quickly and effectively monitor foreign terrorist communications. Congress's failure to pass this legislation was irresponsible. It will leave our Nation increasingly vulnerable to attack, and Congress must fix this damage to our national security immediately.

The way ahead is clear. The Senate has already passed a good bill by an overwhelming bipartisan majority. This bill has strong bipartisan support in the House of Representatives and would pass if given an up-or-down vote. But House leaders are blocking this legislation, and the reason can be summed up in three words: class-action lawsuits.

The Senate bill would prevent plaintiffs' attorneys from suing companies believed to have helped defend America after the 9/11 attacks. More than 40 of these lawsuits have been filed, seeking hundreds of billions of

dollars in damages from these companies. It is unfair and unjust to threaten these companies with financial ruin only because they are believed to have done the right thing and helped their country.

But the highest cost of all is to our national security. Without protection from lawsuits, private companies will be increasingly unwilling to take the risk of helping us with vital intelligence activities. After the Congress failed to act last week, one telecommunications company executive was asked by the Wall Street Journal how his company would respond to a request for help. He answered that because of the threat of lawsuits, quote, "I'm not doing it. I'm not going to do something voluntarily." In other words, the House's refusal to act is undermining our ability to get cooperation from private companies, and that undermines our efforts to protect us from terrorist attack.

Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell recently explained that the vast majority of the communications infrastructure we rely on in the United States is owned and operated by the private sector. Because of the failure to provide liability protection, he says, private companies who have "willingly helped us in the past are now saying, 'You can't protect me. Why should I help you?'" Senator Jay Rockefeller, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, puts it this way: "The fact is, if we lose cooperation from these or other private companies, our national security will suffer."

When Congress reconvenes on Monday, Members of the House have a choice to make: They can empower the trial bar, or they can empower the intelligence community. They can help class-action trial lawyers sue for billions of dollars, or they can help our intelligence officials protect millions of lives. They can put our national security in the hands of plaintiffs' lawyers, or they can

entrust it to the men and women of our Government who work day and night to keep us safe.

As they make their choice, Members of Congress must never forget: Somewhere in the world, at this very moment, terrorists are planning the next attack on America. And to protect America from such attacks, we must protect our telecommunications companies from abusive lawsuits.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10 a.m. on February 22 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 22 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his address, the President referred to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

### Remarks at a Dinner for the National Governors Association Conference

February 24, 2008

Good evening. Laura and I are honored to have you here, and it's a pleasure to be here with a lot of friends. You know, I've developed a unique perspective on this event. For 6 years, I sat and watched the President speak; for 8 years, I was the President and spoke. [Laughter] And next year, I'll be watching on C-SPAN. [Laughter]

I appreciate Tim Pawlenty and Ed Rendell, who serve as the chair and vice chair of the National Governors Association. I congratulate our two newest Governors, Kentucky's Steve Beshear and Louisiana's Bobby Jindal. I might add, Jindal is not here, but he's ably represented by the first lady of Louisiana, Supriya. And I congratulate Governor Haley Barbour of Mississippi for his reelection. I want to thank the Vice President and Lynne Cheney for joining us. I also tell you how thankful I am and honored we are that Vince Gill and Amy Grant have come tonight to entertain us.

I value our Governors because our Governors are some of the Nation's foremost policy entrepreneurs. I appreciate what you do.

I appreciate the sacrifice your families have made to serve America.

It was in that spirit that Teddy Roosevelt hosted the first Governors meeting here at the White House 100 years ago. I can't imagine what they were thinking about what America would look like 100 years ago, and I'm not sure what people will think 100 years from now. But I do know it makes sense to put wise policy in place in the meantime so America can remain prosperous and strong and free.

And so tonight it's my honor to welcome you all and to offer a toast to the Nation's Governors.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:30 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota; Gov. Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania; and entertainers Vince Gill and Amy Grant.

### Remarks During a Meeting With the National Governors Association Conference

February 25, 2008

**The President.** Thank you very much. I'm supposed to stall to wait for the press corps. [Laughter] Chairman, thanks. Let me see your book there, will you? That thing right there, yes. Mr. Vice Chairman, thank you, sir. Hope you enjoyed last night.

**Governor Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania.** Yes, it was great.

**The President.** It was great, yes. It was fun. I am proud to announce to you that Janet Creighton is running the Intergovernmental Affairs Office for us. She looks forward to working with you. I look forward to hearing from you. There's a lot we can do to—for the next 10 months to work together. I like to tell people, you know, I'm going to finish strong, and I want to work with you as I do so.

A couple of areas I want to talk about, then I'll answer a couple of questions. And then evidently, we're going to have a 100th anniversary picture.

We share a responsibility to protect our country. I get briefed every morning about threats we face, and they're real. Now—and therefore, the question is, what do you do

about them? In my judgment, we have got to give the professionals who work hard to protect us all the tools they need. To put it bluntly: If the enemy is calling to America, we really need to know what they're saying, and we need to know what they're thinking, and we need to know what—who they're talking to.

It's—this is a different kind of struggle than we've ever faced before. It's essential that we understand the mentality of these killers. And so therefore, we worked with Congress to protect—pass the Protect America Act, which everybody knows has expired. And I want to share with you the core of the problem. And the problem is, should companies who are believed to have helped us—after 9/11 'til today—get information necessary to protect the country be sued? And my answer is, absolutely not. They shouldn't be sued for a couple of reasons.

One, it's not fair. Our Government told them that their participation was necessary—and it was and still is—and that what we had asked them to do was legal. And now they're getting sued for billions of dollars, and it's not fair. And it will create doubt amongst private sector folks who we need to help protect us.

Secondly, such lawsuits would require disclosure of information, which will make it harder to protect the country. You can imagine, when people start defending themselves, they're going to be asked all kinds of questions about tactics used. It makes absolutely no sense to give the enemy more knowledge about what the United States is doing to protect the American people.

Finally, it'll make it harder to convince companies to participate in the future. I mean, if you've done something that you think is perfectly legal and all of a sudden you're facing billions of dollars of lawsuits, it's going to be hard to provide—with credibility—assurances that we can go forward.

The Senate passed a good bill. You know, there's all kinds of talk about how this is a partisan issue. This is not a partisan issue. There is a very strong bipartisan bill that passed the Senate, and it's a bill that we can live with. And it's a bill that should be put on the House floor for a vote, up or down.

What I do want to share with you is that there's a lot of good folks, and you know it too. And I want to thank you all very much for these counterterrorism cells. I look at the Governor of New York; they got an unbelievably good cell—fusion center in New York City. And around our country, particularly in key areas, the cooperation between the Federal Government and the State government and the local government is superb. And I appreciate you all for providing really good leadership on this issue. It's an important, vital issue for the country.

Secondly, today—and I see that you've been given this book. This is a book which describes the faith-based and community organization initiative. And it breaks out by State the unbelievably good work that's taking place in your States.

Now, as you know, I'm a big believer that government ought to empower people who have got a great capacity to help change people's lives. Sometimes I like to say, government is not a very loving organization; it's an organization of law and justice. But there are thousands of loving people who are willing, if given help, to interface with brothers and sisters across the country that need help. And so this report is one that describes the Federal-State collaborative that's taken place.

There's 35 faith-based offices set up around—in different States. And for those of you who've got them, I thank you. We want to help you—want to coordinate. If you don't have one, I strongly urge you to take a look at what other Governors have done.

Billions of dollars have now gone into help these different community or faith-based groups meet specific needs. One such need is to help children whose parents may be in prison realize there is hope and love. Seventy thousand kids have been affected by this program. Another one is to help prisoners reenter society. It's a relatively new program and—but so far, we've helped—you've helped 10,000 people readjust.

Another is to provide script for somebody who needs help on drugs and alcohol and can redeem this at a regular counseling center or a faith-based center. But the whole purpose is to focus on results. You know, we

ought to be asking what works, not the process. And so I appreciate you taking a look at this. Again, I want to thank you for your cooperation, to the extent that you feel comfortable doing so. It's making a huge difference in people's lives, and I congratulate you all.

And finally, I want to spend a little time on health care. This obviously is a—you know, it's a tough issue here in Washington. And I do want to spend just a moment to explain to you the philosophy by which we'll be trying to get legislation passed out of the Congress.

One, we share the same goal, accessible and affordable health care. Secondly, whatever we do must not undermine a health care system that is the best in the world. Our doctors are great; our technology is unbelievable; our hospitals are wonderful. And is it perfect? No. But it is the best in the world. Private medicine has worked in America, and the question is, can we strengthen it, rather than weaken it?

And finally, I believe firmly that any good health care system is one that empowers individuals to be a better consumer, have more choices. And that was the whole spirit of the Medicare reforms. It's quite a controversial act up here in Washington. But time has passed, and there's some interesting news.

First of all, the—inherent in the Medicare reform was one that made no sense not to provide prescription drugs for seniors. I mean, you know, people would go get an operation for a heart ailment. It would cost the taxpayers thousands and thousands of dollars, but we wouldn't pay for the pills that could prevent the heart operation from being needed in the first place. It just made no sense. Medicare was an old system, and it was antiquated. And I firmly believed it needed reform.

Secondly, inherent in this reform was the idea of giving seniors a variety of choices. For example, now seniors have got choices for a different drug plan. Drug plans are now competing for the seniors' business. Seniors have got different options for other coverage in Medicare. And as a result of the competition, fostered by the fact that folks have got different decision points to make, they say, if you want my business, you're going to have

to do better; in other words, a market-oriented approach—the estimated cost of Medicare is down by \$240 billion over 10 years. You might remember, there was—when the Medicare debate was started, they were firing out all kinds of numbers. Well, it's 240 billion less than initially anticipated. I believe competition works; markets make sense.

And also in that bill was the health savings account reform, which gives individuals more decisionmaking over their own health care. It allows for a catastrophic policy and health—tax-free savings for monies not spent on ordinary expenses. It's a way, really, to enhance portability. Somebody told me the other day that if you're under 30 years old, you're likely to have had seven jobs when you reach your 30th birthday. It's a different era. People are moving around. There's a—you know, it's an exciting time, but it's also a time that creates uncertainty, particularly when it comes to somebody being able to carry a good health care policy with them.

So the notion is to empower consumers to be more in charge of their decisionmaking. There's now 4½ million people on HSAs. When given an opportunity, people are now taking a look at it. It's a difficult thing for people to understand. It's pretty complex. But nevertheless, when the consumers are being given more choices, more opportunities, with more knowledge—just like we're providing for our seniors—people make rational choices.

There is more we can do here in Washington, DC. I don't know if you've studied our Tax Code, but it is biased against people who want to buy an individual policy. If you're working for a company, you get a benefit when it comes to health care. If you're in the individual marketplace, you pay with after-tax dollars. And it's unfair, and it creates discrepancies. And it makes it harder to make sure private insurance is available at reasonable prices—more reasonable prices to the individual, which affects small businesses, sole proprietorships, the people that are really the lifeblood of our economy.

So I think Congress needs to make the Tax Code fair. Everybody ought to be treated the same in the Tax Code in order to encourage

the development of a market for private individuals, which will help your small-business owners and obviously help families.

Now, one of the interesting things that has taken place in the States, and one of—I think our jobs is—I said last night, you know, that the Governors are policy entrepreneurs. And I meant what I said. And I find it interesting that in certain States, like in Florida, private companies compete for Medicaid business. Like in Indiana, you know, Mitch has helped uninsured be able to participate in an HSA. Like in Oklahoma, you've helped the uninsured or low-income workers purchase health care through competition from—with Medicaid dollars.

In other words, there's some wonderful things going on, all market-driven. And we just want to facilitate those decisions because, in my judgment, the opposite of having the Government here in Washington be the decisionmaker will undermine private medicine, will make quality care more difficult.

And so those are some of the thoughts I wanted to share with you. I appreciate you giving me time. I'll answer a couple of your questions. I thank the national press corps for joining us. See you later. *[Laughter]*

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota, chairman, and Gov. Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania, vice chairman, National Governors Association; Janet Creighton, Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Intergovernmental Affairs; Gov. Eliot Spitzer of New York; and Gov. Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., of Indiana.

### **Statement on the Situation in Burma** *February 25, 2008*

The situation in Burma remains deplorable. The regime has rejected calls from its own people and the international community to begin a genuine dialog with the opposition and ethnic minority groups. Arrests and secret trials of peaceful political activists continue, such as the recent arrest of journalists Thet Zin and Sein Win Maung. Severe human rights abuses by the Burmese Army,

including burning down homes and killing civilians, continue in ethnic minority areas in eastern Burma.

The United States continues to seek a peaceful transition to a democratic government that will promote stability and prosperity in Burma and in the region. We support continued engagement by the U.N. Security Council and United Nations Secretary-General Ban's good offices mission, as well as sustained regional engagement.

As one element of our policy to promote a genuine democratic transition, the U.S. maintains targeted sanctions that focus on the assets of regime members and their cronies who grow rich while Burma's people suffer under their misrule. Therefore, today the Department of the Treasury has applied financial sanctions against Steven Law, a regime crony also suspected of drug trafficking activities, and his financial network, including his wife, father, and 14 companies, pursuant to Executive Order 13448.

Additionally, the Department of the Treasury has applied sanctions to two resorts owned and operated by known regime crony and arms merchant Tay Za, himself designated for sanctions in October 2007. Today's actions add to the 33 individuals and 11 entities previously designated. Furthermore, as a result of the enhanced visa restrictions that I announced in September 2007, 898 Burmese officials and their family members are now subject to visa restrictions.

Concerted international pressure is needed to achieve a genuine transition to democracy in Burma. We encourage Burma's neighbors and other stakeholders in Southeast Asia to impress upon the regime the need to release all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, to end military offensives and human rights abuses against ethnic minorities, and to begin a genuine transition to democracy in response to the demonstrated aspirations of all the peoples of Burma.

NOTE: The statement referred to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; Cecilia Ng and Lo Hsing Han, wife and father of Steven Law; and Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma.



## Remarks at the Republican Governors Association Gala

February 25, 2008

Thank you all. Please be seated—unless, of course, you don't have a seat.

Governor, thank you very much for your kind introduction. Thank you all for coming, and thanks for supporting our Republican Governors. If you want to raise money, if you want to get a job done, call on the Texas Governor—and this Governor has delivered.

I appreciate all the other Governors who are here. I particularly want to thank Matt Blunt and Mark Sanford, who are leading the RGA, and all the other Governors that have—on the stage today. I can't thank you enough for your service to the country.

I also want to recognize Laura. She's starring in a new movie: mother of the bride. *[Laughter]* I'm not very objective when I say this, but Laura is a fabulous First Lady. I appreciate the members of the Cabinet who are here.

Republican Governors are smart, capable people. I'd like to read the roster of former Governors who worked in the Bush administration: Thompson, Ashcroft, Ridge, Whitman, Cellucci, Johanns, Leavitt, Kempthorne, and Schafer. Three people that worked in the Bush administration went on to be Governors: Daniels, Huntsman, and Jindal. I'm smart enough to hire Republican Governors, and so are the people in the States that these men are from.

I don't know about you, but I'm confident we'll hold the White House in 2008. And I don't want the next Republican President to be lonely—*[laughter]*. And that is why we got to take the House, retake the Senate, and make sure our States are governed by Republican Governors.

Our ideas are those embraced by the American people. American people want strong national defense, and they want the Government to protect the people from further attack, and that's precisely what Republicans will give them. Americans want lower taxes and less government, and it's precisely what Republicans will give them. Americans want strong, principled leadership, and that is precisely what Republicans will give them.

And so when I say I'm confident, I am so because I understand the mentality of the American people, and I understand the mentality of our candidates. And there's no question in my mind, with your help, 2008 is going to be a great year.

I want to talk about two issues that will affect the upcoming elections. The first is, is that we must elect candidates who understand that this Nation is involved with an ideological struggle against coldblooded killers who would like to do us harm again, and that we better be strong and resolute in the face of this enemy.

Our philosophy is that the best way to defend America is to defeat the enemy overseas so we do not have to face them here at home. And that's precisely what the United States of America is doing.

There are two major fronts in this war; one is in Afghanistan and one is in Iraq. And I want to spend a little time on Iraq. First of all, the decision to remove Saddam Hussein was the right decision for world peace and for the security of the American people.

One year ago, extremists, coldblooded killers, people who kill innocent men, women, and children to achieve their ideological objectives were succeeding in their efforts to plunge Iraq into chaos. So I had a choice to make. Do I suffer the consequences of defeat by withdrawing our troops, or do I listen to my commanders, the considered judgment of military experts, and do what it takes to secure victory in Iraq? I chose the latter. Rather than retreating, we sent 30,000 new troops into Iraq, and the surge is succeeding.

High-profile attacks are down. Civilian deaths are down. Sectarian killings are down. U.S. and Iraqi forces, who are becoming more capable by the day, have captured or killed thousands of extremists in Iraq, including hundreds of key Al Qaida leaders—the very same people that would like to hurt America once again.

The progress in Iraq is tough; the progress in Iraq is tangible; and the progress in Iraq is enabling this young democracy to begin to make progress under the most modern Constitution written in the Middle East.

I can promise you this: For the next 10 months, I will make the necessary decisions

to make sure that we succeed in Iraq. And I believe the American people understand that a success in Iraq is necessary for the long-term security of the American people. And we will elect someone in the White House who will keep up the fight to make sure Iraq is secure and free.

One of the principles by which I have been operating is this: I believe in an Almighty, and I believe a gift of that Almighty to every man, woman, and child is freedom. And I believe it is in the interests of the United States of America to free people from disease and hunger and want and tyranny. It is in our interests to make sure that we defeat the ideologues of hate with an ideology that has worked throughout the centuries. I believe 50 years from now, people will look back at this period of time and say, thank God the United States of America did not lose its faith in the transformative power of liberty to bring the peace we want for our children and our grandchildren.

And we've got to do everything we can to stop attacks on the homeland. There are thousands of people who are working day and night to do the job that the American people expect them to do, and that's to protect you from further attack. Make no mistake about it, there is an enemy that lurks and plots and plans, an enemy that would like to do us harm again.

And therefore, it is incumbent, it is essential that the professionals who are working hard to protect you have the tools they need to be able to do the job we expect them. And one such tool is the ability to listen to the phone conversations or the trafficking of the enemy. We need to know what they're thinking, who they're talking to, and what they're planning in order to do the job the American people expect us to do.

And that is why we worked with the United States Congress last summer to pass the Protect America Act. And the Congress passed the act, giving our professionals the tools they need. The problem is, the act expired recently, and yet to—the threat to America has not expired. And so now we're in a debate about whether or not we ought to pass a good piece of legislation necessary to protect the American people.

And here's the crux of the problem: Companies that were believed to have helped us protect America from attack are now being sued for billions of dollars. That's wrong; it's a mistake, and the United States Congress needs to give those companies liability protection. And let me tell you why.

First, it is not fair to treat these companies this way. Our Government told them that their participation was necessary in order to protect us from further attack. And we asked them—and when we asked them to make those protections, we told them it was legal to do so. And I firmly believe it is legal for them to help us protect the American people. And now they're getting sued. What's more important, lawyers or protecting the United States of America from further attack?

Secondly, these lawsuits would require disclosure of information which would make it harder to protect the country. If these trials—if these cases go to trial, these companies will have to defend themselves. And they'll be asked all kinds of questions about the tactics they have used to help protect our country. It makes no sense to reveal our secrets to the enemy.

Thirdly, and finally, these—without law, without liability protection for a job that we asked them to do in service to the United States of America, it will make it harder to convince companies to participate in the future. If you've done something that you think is perfectly legal and all of a sudden you're facing billions of dollars of lawsuits, it is going to be hard to provide—with credibility—asurances that you can go forward.

And that's the crux of the problem. People say, "Well, you know, it's a—there's a bunch of folks that just don't see it that way." Well, I want to remind you that a good, bipartisan bill came out of the United States Senate. And there's enough votes in the House of Representatives to pass this piece of legislation. It is time the leadership in the House stops worrying about lawyers and starts worrying more about protecting the United States of America from further attack.

And one thing the American people can be assured of, our Republican candidates understand the threats facing us, and our Republican candidates will make sure that our

professionals have the tools necessary to protect the American people.

Our domestic agenda is based upon this simple principle: We trust the American people, and we will empower them to make the right decisions for their families. We trust in the collective wisdom of the American citizenry.

On health, we trust patients to make their own decisions. And we empower them with HSAs and AHPs, all aimed at making sure health care decisions are made between patients and doctors, not by bureaucrats here in Washington, DC.

We trust parents when it comes to education and empower them with strong accountability. We believe in an ownership society for Americans from all walks of life. When it comes to the economy, this is the basis for our views. We trust America's consumers and farmers and ranchers and producers and small-business people, and we empower them by allowing them to keep more of their own money.

Now, I want you to understand and remind you of the history of our economy, recent history. We've been through a lot. In 7 years, we've been through a recession and attacks on the United States of America and corporate scandals and war and natural disasters and high oil prices. But instead of increasing the size of government, we cut taxes on everybody who pays taxes in the United States of America and had 52 months of uninterrupted job growth—the longest in the history of the American economy.

And at the same time, we were fiscally responsible with your money. Now, I admit, we increased spending in certain areas, and I'm going to continue to increase spending in this important area. We will make sure that our troops have all that is necessary to do the job the United States of America has asked them to do. And you can bet our Republican candidates will do the exact same thing.

On nonsecurity discretionary spending, we reduced it lower than the rate of inflation and have submitted to the United States Congress a budget which will be in balance by 2012.

Now our economy is facing uncertainty again, and the fundamental question is, what

do we do? Some in Washington want to increase spending. Fortunately, enough realize that the best way to deal with this economic uncertainty is to empower our consumers and our businesses, both large and small, to make investments that will affect job growth this year.

And so I was pleased to sign a \$157 billion progrowth economic package, which should help us deal with these economic uncertainties. People say, "What else should we do?" Well, unless Congress acts, most of the tax relief we delivered over the past 7 years will be taken away. We cut taxes on families with children. We cut taxes on small businesses. We cut taxes on capital gains. We cut taxes on dividends. We've put the death tax on the road to extinction. We cut taxes on everybody who paid taxes, and unless the Congress acts, those tax cuts will end.

Some Democrats argue that letting tax relief expire is not a tax increase. Well, they're going to have to explain that to 116 million American taxpayers who would see their taxes rise by an average of \$1,800. That may not seem like a lot of people, in Washington, DC, but it's sure a lot of people who are trying to make their mortgages and send their kids to college.

In times of uncertainty, we don't need uncertainty in our Tax Code. And the United States Congress must make the tax relief we passed permanent. And the American people can be assured that our candidates will not be running up taxes.

Those are the two big issues facing us, who best to protect America and who best to keep taxes low. I'm looking forward to this campaign. I'm excited about taking our message to the American people. With your help and hard work, there's no doubt in my mind—no doubt—that we'll win.

And I'm looking forward to finishing my term in office. I want to tell you this: I'm going to finish strong. My vision is clear. My energy is high. My enthusiasm for the United States of America has never waned since I've had the high honor of serving you as President.

I thank you for your prayers. I thank you for your support. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:56 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Rick Perry of Texas, chairman, Republican Governors Association, who introduced the President; Gov. Matt Blunt of Missouri, vice chairman, and Gov. Mark Sanford of South Carolina, dinner chairman, Republican Governors Association; former Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson; former Attorney General John Ashcroft; former Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge; former Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency Christine Todd Whitman; former U.S. Ambassador to Canada Argeo Paul Cellucci; former Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns; Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael O. Leavitt; Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne; Secretary of Agriculture Edward T. Schafer; Gov. Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., of Indiana; Gov. Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., of Utah; and Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana.

## Remarks to the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation

February 26, 2008

Thanks for coming. I appreciate the warm welcome. Last Thursday, Laura and I returned from a 6-day visit to Africa. It happened to be her fifth visit and my second. Without a doubt, this was the most exciting, exhilarating, uplifting trip I've taken since I've been the President. It was an unbelievable experience.

And I want to thank the Sullivan Foundation for letting me come by to visit with you about the trip. And I appreciate the good work they're doing on behalf of the people on the continent of Africa. Hope, thank you very much for introducing me and inviting me back. It's always an honor to be with Andrew Young, chairman of the board of directors of Leon Sullivan.

By the way, I should have recognized Carl Masters, your husband—[laughter]. That was a major faux pas, just like I should have recognized that my wife, unfortunately, is not here, but she sends her very best regards.

I do appreciate very much Ambassador Howard Jeter for his service to the United States. I thank the members of the Leon H. Sullivan Foundation who are with us. Pleased to see members of the diplomatic corps who have joined us.

I'm honored that Congressman Donald Payne, who is the chairman of the Africa and Global Health Subcommittee, has joined us today. Thank you for coming, Mr. Chairman. He's knowledgeable about the issues on the continent of Africa, and that's good. And I want to thank you for your interest and your diligence. Sheila Jackson Lee—she's supposed to be here. If she's not here, I'll give her an excused absence—after all, she is from Texas.

I appreciate so very much Jendayi Frazer. She is a—[applause]. I probably won't have to say anything else. [Laughter] She's been awesome to work with, in putting this strategy in place.

I appreciate very much Rear Admiral Tim Ziemer. He's in charge of the malaria initiative. Admiral Ziemer, he's a no-nonsense guy. I hope people have come to realize I am too. I'm not interested in promises; I'm interested in results. That's why I went to Africa, to see results firsthand. Admiral Ziemer, we're getting great results on the malaria initiative thanks to your leadership.

Lloyd Pierson, President and CEO of the African Development Foundation—appreciate your leadership, Lloyd. Jody Olsen, Deputy Director of the Peace Corps—[applause]—contain yourselves. [Laughter] Although, I'll tell you—it's not a part of this speech, but I had a wonderful lunch with Peace Corps volunteers in Ghana. Our Peace Corps is full of compassionate, hard-working, decent people who are serving America on the frontlines of compassion. And I really can't thank the Peace Corps enough.

Last time we met was at your summit in Nigeria, and that was during my first trip to Africa. You know, things have changed in Africa since then, I mean, striking changes. These changes are the result of a new generation of African leaders. They're reformers who are determined to steer their nations toward freedom and justice, prosperity and peace. They're also the result of new American policy and new American commitments.

In my first term, we more than doubled development assistance to Africa. And at the beginning of my second term, I asked the United States Congress to double our assistance again. It is an important commitment that Congress can make. I'm looking forward

to working to get these budgets out, Mr. Chairman.

America is on a mission of mercy. We're treating African leaders as equal partners. We expect them to produce measurable results. We expect them to fight corruption and invest in the health and education of their people and pursue market-based economic policies. This mission serves our security interests. People who live in chaos and despair are more likely to fall under the sway of violent ideologies. This mission serves our moral interests. We're all children of God, and having the power to save lives comes with the obligation to use it.

This mission rarely makes headlines in the United States. But when you go to Africa, it is a visible part of daily life, and there's no doubt that our mission is succeeding. You see it when you hold a baby that would have died of malaria without America's support. You see it when you look into the eyes of an AIDS patient who has been brought back to life. You see it in the quiet pride of a child going to school for the first time. And you see that turning away from this life-changing work would be a cause for shame.

The best argument for our development programs is found in the people they benefit. So with the help of our fabulous White House photographers, I have assembled a slideshow—[laughter]—of images from our visit. And this morning it is my pleasure to share it with you.

[At this point, a slideshow was shown.]

Our first stop was to the western African nation of Benin, where we touched down on a Saturday morning. Benin is a vibrant democracy with a rich history. It has a wise and determined leader in President Yayi. I was proud to be the first sitting American President to visit the country.

At the airport, we were greeted by women and children wearing traditional dress, and they were dancing and playing drums. And they brought several hand-painted signs that the American people need to look at: "Benin people and his President thank the whole U.S. people." "Beninese people will remember forever."

President Yayi and I had a productive meeting. He told me that the malaria initia-

tive and our \$307 million Millennium Challenge compact are helping alleviate poverty and save lives in his country. And I told him that America's support is a reflection of his commitment to govern justly and to tackle problems head on. I congratulated him on his effort to fight malaria, which apparently includes a national awareness day called George W. Bush Day. [Laughter] I pointed out to him that hasn't even happened in Texas. [Laughter]

While President Yayi and I had our discussion, Laura and Mrs. Yayi met with girls who have received scholarships through our Africa Education Initiative. In Benin, these scholarships cover the cost of school supplies, such as uniforms and books and oil lanterns that allow students to read at night. Many of these girls are the first in their family to complete primary school. And their plans didn't stop there. Three girls told Laura that their goal is to become the first woman President of Benin.

Laura and I left Benin impressed by the energy and determination of its people. Benin is an optimistic, it is a confident, and it is a capable nation. And it was a great place to begin our visit to Africa.

Our next stop was Tanzania. We were met by President Kikwete and Mrs. Kikwete as well as Tanzanians. They were dancing, and they were playing great music. And there was also some unexpected fashion. [Laughter] I thought the dresses were pretty stylish. [Laughter] But my good wife reminded me that I shouldn't expect to see them flying off the shelves in American stores anytime soon. [Laughter]

As we drove from the airport to our hotel, there were tens of thousands of people who lined the motorcade route to show their gratitude to the American people. And many of them were smiling, and they were waving, and they were holding flags. It was an unbelievable—unbelievable sight.

Sunday morning began with a meeting with President Kikwete at the State House. The President told me that relations between our nations are the best they have ever been. He said that America's support is helping Tanzania improve education and fight HIV/AIDS and dramatically reduce malaria. He gave me a memorable gift. Laura said we

probably need another pet. *[Laughter]* I'm worried that Barney might be slightly intimidated.

Following our meeting, we signed the largest Millennium Challenge compact in the history of the program. The \$698 million agreement will support Tanzania's efforts to improve transportation and energy and its water supply. At a news conference, I again called for Congress to reauthorize the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, to maintain the principles that have made it a success, and to double our initial commitment to \$30 billion over the next 5 years. Then President Kikwete jumped in to say—and I want to quote him on this—“If this program is discontinued or disrupted, there would be so many people who lose hope; certainly, there will be death. My passionate appeal is for PEPFAR to continue.” I couldn't agree more with the President. And I hope every Member of the United States Congress hears that appeal.

They should also hear about the HIV/AIDS clinic at the Amana District Hospital, where Laura and I visited with the President and Mrs. Kikwete on Sunday afternoon. The clinic opened in 2004 with support from PEPFAR. And two thoughts struck me on the visit. First, this program is saving lives; there are tangible results. When I visited sub-Saharan Africa in 2003, 50,000 people were receiving medicine to treat HIV/AIDS. When I visited again last week, the number had grown to more than 1.3 million.

At the clinic, we visited with a man and woman who learned they had HIV while they were dating but went on to get treatment, get married, and have a little baby boy who is HIV-free. We saw many others who have new hope because of PEPFAR, including a 9-year-old girl who is HIV-positive. She was smiling at the clinic with her grandmother because—sitting at the clinic with her grandmother because her mom and dad had died of AIDS. For the past year, Catholic Relief Services has been paying for the girl to receive treatment at the clinic. And I want to tell you what her grandmother said: “As a Muslim, I never imagined that a Catholic group would help me like that. I am so grateful to the American people.”

The second important point is that PEPFAR is allowing African nations to lay the foundation for a health system that does more than treat HIV/AIDS. When patients report to the clinic, they are given a series of tests, they get results quickly from a laboratory on site, and they can receive treatment in the same place. I was struck by the devotion and the professionalism of the clinic's staff. They spoke proudly about the rigorous training they received and the meticulous way they instruct patients on how to take their medicine. One nurse said PEPFAR funds are helping them to treat more patients while providing more privacy. This is helping extend lives, reduce the stigma of HIV/AIDS, and build the health infrastructure that will save many more lives in the future.

On Monday, we traveled to the northern part of Tanzania. We passed Mount Kilimanjaro and drove past a lot of people who were lining the street on the way to the city of Arusha. Of course, that's where the Sullivan Foundation is going to have its next meeting. You'll like it up there. *[Laughter]* And the people will like seeing you.

It's also on the frontlines of Tanzania's fight against malaria. Laura and I visited the Meru District Hospital, and we saw moms and babies that were overcoming this disease. When new mothers bring their babies, the hospital immediately tests them for malaria and HIV. Nurses distribute bed net vouchers, which mothers can use to buy insecticide-treated bed nets from local retailers at a 75-percent discount. I was concerned about the 75-percent discount, and so I announced a new effort, and that is to distribute an additional 5.2 million bed nets free of charge. And that would be enough for every child in Tanzania between the ages of 1 and 5. It is irresponsible to sit on the sidelines knowing that young babies are needlessly dying across the continent of Africa and elsewhere. And I was really pleased to be able to kick off this new initiative by handing out bed nets to this young mother.

So it made sense to go to the local factory where the bed nets are produced—called A to Z Textiles. On the floor of the newly opened facility, we saw the nets produced in a clean, safe working environment. The owner explained that the factory employs

1,200 local workers. If we're helping projects in Africa, we want those projects to employ people from the country in which we're helping. And the vast majority of those workers are women.

He takes great pride in supplying bed nets to Zanzibar, where the percentage of infants—I want you to hear this—where the percentage of infants infected with malaria has dropped from about 20 percent to less than 1 percent in 2 years. He called America—the American people's efforts to fight malaria “a godsend.” And I agree. I thanked him for his good work and was honored to see stacks of these lifesaving nets bearing the name of the United States of America.

In the afternoon, we visited a Maasai girls' school, where we received an unbelievably stirring welcome from the students. This school is led by a Catholic nun—who was on my left—empowers girls who have long lacked education. The girls receive scholarships from our Africa Education Initiative. The girls sang these lyrics: “Look at us. Listen to our voices. Today we can study because of the American people.” It was a stirring anthem. We also met a group of Maasai men. These guys can flag jump. *[Laughter]* Unbelievably powerful experience for Laura and me, and it was a great way to close our visit to Tanzania.

Early Tuesday morning, we headed to Rwanda. After flying over Lake Victoria, we touched down in the beautiful city of Kigali. We were greeted by Rwanda's thoughtful and effective leader, President Paul Kagame, along with Mrs. Kagame.

Our first stop in Rwanda was to the Kigali Memorial Centre. Laura and I laid a wreath to honor the victims of the 1994 genocide. I don't know if our citizens understand this, but between 800,000 and a million people were murdered in a very short period of time. More than 250,000 are buried at this memorial, and many of them were children, who are depicted in photographs that were donated by their families. This is a moving, moving memorial. One inscription read, “Age 4. Enjoyed singing and dancing.” And then it listed the brutal way in which this young girl was murdered. The memorial is a moving reminder that evil is real and we must confront it wherever it happens.

The memorial centre is also a reminder of how far Rwanda has come in the past 14 years. During our meeting, President Kagame updated me on his country's dramatic and hopeful turnaround. Rwanda has taken bold steps to foster reconciliation, rebuild its devastated infrastructure, and to grow its economy. It is a hopeful country. And to build on this progress, the President and I signed a bilateral investment treaty, which will help attract more capital to Rwanda's dynamic economy.

We're also cooperating on matters beyond Rwanda's borders. I thanked Rwanda for being the first nation to contribute peacekeepers to Darfur. And I announced that the United States has committed \$100 million to assist African nations willing to step forward and serve the cause of peace in Darfur. I also had the honor of dedicating a new U.S. Embassy in Kigali, which is a sign of our lasting commitment and our deep friendship.

Our final stop in Rwanda was a hillside school that is supported by PEPFAR, the emergency plan. It was a really interesting experience. We met with a lot of students and their parents. You know, this is a scene at the most popular club at the school, which is the Anti-Aids Club. The students told me about their ambitious projects, which include teaching abstinence and providing HIV/AIDS testing and counseling. Abstinence may be controversial in the Halls of Congress; it is not controversial on this campus. As a matter of fact, they put a skit on for us. In it, a girl is approached by a rich man who offers her gifts in exchange for sex. She calls it a “ridiculous” proposition and says, “I'm not that kind of girl.”

Laura and I departed Kigali inspired by the courage of the Rwanda people, grateful for their hospitality, and confident in their extraordinary potential for the future.

Our fourth stop was Ghana. We received another warm welcome, with tens of thousands lining the street, including thousands of schoolchildren in their uniforms. I suspect they're really happy I came; they didn't have to go to school—*[laughter]*—at least until the motorcade passed.

President Kufuor and I met at Osu Castle. It's a striking white building on the shore of the Atlantic. For generations, the castle was

a post in the slave trade. And today, it is a seat of a proud and democratic Government. During our meeting, President Kufuor and I discussed the wide-ranging cooperation between the United States and Ghana.

After the meeting, I added a new element to our partnership, a \$350 million initiative to target neglected tropical diseases like river blindness and hookworm across the globe. Needless to say, the President really welcomed this announcement.

He spoke powerfully about the ideological struggle unfolding around the world, and he stressed the importance of America's continued engagement in Africa. Listen to his words: "If the United States should lock itself into isolationism and think it is safer, then I would say, perhaps they don't know what is coming." Wise words from a wise man.

Our next stop was a visit to the Embassy staff at the U.S. Ambassador's Residence in Accra. I think the audience was happy to see Laura and me—it seemed that way—but I know they were even more excited to see our surprise guest, reigning American Idol Jordin Sparks. This young child can sing. *[Laughter]* And she sang the national anthem that inspired all that were there. And I reminded people there that this spring, American Idol will again use its prominence across our TV screens to raise funds for malaria relief in Africa.

After lunch, we went to a trade fair and met local merchants who export their products to the United States through AGOA. And my predecessor gets a lot of credit for getting AGOA out of the United States Congress, and I appreciate the Congress working to extend it again. This is a good program, and it's working.

At the trade fair, we saw how the USAID helps these budding entrepreneurs secure financing and increase their access to the U.S. market. Sometimes we take entrepreneurship for granted. The spirit exists, but sometimes people just need a little help. And that's what we're doing.

One group called Global Mamas specializes in helping women entrepreneurs find new places to sell their goods. With USAID help, the company has gone from 7 employees to about 300 employees in 5 years. Those are before Global Mamas.

One woman named Esther runs a dress-making company called My Redeemer Liveth. Since the trade hub opened, she's increased her exports and more than tripled her number of employees. She told me, "I'm helping other women, and I'm helping my family too."

One of the keys to helping Africa succeed is to empower entrepreneurs. It is in our interest, as well, to open up trade and deal with subsidies and trade-distorting tariffs. And on the continent, I assured the leaders that I am firmly dedicated to coming up with a successful Doha round to make trade freer and fairer.

After the trade fair, we drove to a local school for one of the best ways you can spend a sunny afternoon, and that's watching a ball game. In this case, it was a tee-ball game. One team featured players from a local orphanage. Americans have got to know, there's a lot of orphans on the continent of Africa as a result of disease and civil strife. It's in our interests to help the orphans, and we are. They were called the Little Dragons, and we played a team from a local school that happened to be called the Little Saints. *[Laughter]* And we saw some very talented players.

We also met great coaches and mentors, many of them from our Embassy, who give their time to help the children improve themselves on the diamond and off. But this is more than a baseball program. This is a hopeful program. This is a program where people realize love. And this is a program where kids are able to develop aspirations and dreams. Some of them, of course, want to be big league players, but a lot of them—and they'll find out, if they can't hit the curve ball, they won't be—but a lot of them want to be doctors and pilots and engineers. One child told me, "I want to be a fashion designer." *[Laughter]* It's in our interests that we help people realize their dreams.

Laura spent time with Ghana's school-children. Here she is with Mrs. Kufuor. They were treated to a kindergarten performance of a song about math, and they listened to a fifth grade debate. And she opened a library. Laura is a librarian. She loves the library; she loves books. And she opened up a reading hut built with support of USAID.



And beneath the shade of the hut, she enjoyed some story time with eager young readers and a reading mascot. He's the guy on the left. *[Laughter]*

That evening, the President hosted a spectacular state dinner. The night ended with an impromptu dance to a traditional beat called high life. Some of us put on a better performance than others. *[Laughter]* That is our Ambassador. *[Laughter]* She was somewhat taken aback—*[laughter]*—as was Laura and most everybody else in the audience. *[Laughter]*

I'm impressed by the President of Ghana. He is an example of a leader who has made right choices for his people. And it is in our interests to support such leaders.

Early Thursday morning, we left Ghana for our final stop, which was Liberia. We were met by Africa's first democratically elected woman President, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. In her office in Monrovia, the President told me about the challenges her country faces and her detailed plan to meet them. She has assembled a wise group of advisers and ministers, many of whom were educated in the United States. And I took a little time there at the meeting to thank them for leaving our wonderful country to go back home and help this young democracy not only survive but to thrive. I told the President that I admire Liberia's recovery from war and that she could count on America to continue to stand by her side. And that's a commitment we must keep.

The spirit of the Liberian people was unmistakable. We drove through the city. Again, there was some—a lot of folks lining the road, and they were cheering, and they were enthusiastic, and they were waving flags. I went to thank those who work at our Embassy, and I told them that the desire for freedom is universal. And it was interesting, the response from the Liberians in the audience, and they started shouting back, "Yes!" at the top of their lungs. They wanted America to hear their voices.

When Liberian troops trained—Liberia troops who were trained with U.S. funds marched past us—the President and me reviewing the troops—it was a proud moment. All of a sudden, you're beginning to see a force take place that will be disciplined and

serve the people as opposed to intimidating the people. It's worth our interests and efforts to help train people—these governments train force to bring stability to their countries.

But nothing sums up the new Liberia better than its approach to education. We had a roundtable at the University of Liberia. By the way, I'm pretty certain the President was educated at the University of Pennsylvania. The more people who come to be educated in the United States from abroad, the better off our country will be.

This man here is getting U.S. help to train teachers and principals to help rebuild the country's school system. I met a 15-year-old boy who was once reading well below grade level, and he didn't like going to school; that's what he said to the crowd. Both Presidents sitting there, he said, "I just didn't like going to school." And he was falling behind. And yet there's a USAID program to help students like him catch up, and now he wants to go to college. This woman I met told us that her husband left her and three children because she was illiterate. Pitiful excuse for not being—you know, standing up and being a good father. But nevertheless, it's what she said. And now she has learned to read, and she plans to go to college. And like a lot of other people we met, she wants to be the President of Liberia. *[Laughter]*

The progress in Liberia is real, and it is inspiring. As a Liberian official put it during a prayer at one of our ceremonies—and these are prayerful people, and they're not afraid to pray in public—the nation has passed from "the valley of despair to the buoyancy of new hope." The Liberian people have a distance to travel, but they do have an unshakable faith in liberty. And they got a faithful friend in the United States of America.

And so throughout our trip, Laura and I were overwhelmed by the outpouring of warmth and affection for the American people. Again and again, we heard the same words: "Thank you." Thank you for sparing lives from malaria and HIV/AIDS. Thank you for training teachers and bringing books to schools. Thank you for investing in infrastructure and helping our economies grow. Thank you for supporting freedom. And

thank you for caring about the people in Africa.

Americans should feel proud, mighty proud, of the work we're doing in Africa. At every stop, I told people that the source of all these efforts is the generosity of the American people. We are a nation of compassionate and good-hearted folks. We recognize the extraordinary potential of Africa. In schoolchildren waving flags on dusty roadsides to nurses caring for their patients at busy clinics to artisans selling their products in scorching heat, we saw people who have been given great challenges and responded to them with clear eyes and big hearts.

In Rwanda, a schoolteacher was discussing the fight to eradicate malaria and AIDS with her class. And she explained her attitude this way: "It can happen here." With those words, she summed up the new spirit of Africa: confident and determined and strong.

This is a spirit worthy of America's support. It is more powerful than any partisan quarrels here in our Nation's Capital. And having given our word, we must not turn back now. Congress needs to make America's commitment clear by fully and promptly funding our development programs. And Presidential candidates of both parties should make clear that engagement with Africa will be an enduring priority of the United States.

Laura and I are going to carry many fond memories from our trips to Africa. We will carry this clear conviction: With the continued support of America, the people of Africa can do more than survive; the people of Africa can succeed. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:48 a.m. at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Hope Masters, special adviser, Leon H. Sullivan Foundation, and her husband, Carlton A. Masters; Howard F. Jeter, president and chief executive officer, Leon H. Sullivan Foundation; Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi E. Frazer; President Thomas Yayi Boni of Benin and his wife, Chantal de Souza Yayi; President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of Tanzania and his wife, Salma Kikwete; Anug Shah, owner, A to Z Textiles; President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and his wife, Jeannette Nyiramongi; President John Agyekum Kufuor of Ghana and his wife, Theresa Kufuor; entertainer Jordin Sparks; and U.S. Ambassador to Ghana Pamela E. Bridgewater.

## **Remarks Following a Meeting With Former Cabinet Secretaries and Senior Government Officials**

*February 26, 2008*

I've just had a fascinating meeting with folks who have served our country nobly in the past. I thank them for coming. We got Democrats here; Republicans are here, concerned citizens. And our discussion was the trade bill with Colombia.

The trade bill is—with Colombia is a really important piece of legislation for America's national security. A stable neighborhood is in our interests. We want people to be prosperous; we want people to be free; we want people to feel comfortable about making, you know, the tough decisions that democracy requires. And the trade vote with Colombia would say a clear message to a strong democratic ally: We support you; we support you in your efforts.

A defeat of the trade bill with Colombia would send a contradictory message. It would embolden the false populism that exists on the continent. It would send a chilling signal to our allies, and it would harm national security of the United States.

We also talked about the economic benefits. Many of the Colombian goods come into our country duty free. It seems like we ought to be treated the same way by sending our products into their countries. And this will particularly benefit small businesses and farmers and ranchers.

And I want to thank you for your suggestions on how to advance this trade bill, how we can work with both Republicans and Democrats to get this trade bill out soon. It's in the Nation's interests. And a lot of time people think about trade, it's just an economic issue. In this case, it is a national security issue and one that the members of both parties must take seriously. And I repeat: If the trade bill with Colombia is defeated, it will harm the national security interests of the country.

And I thank you all for coming. I appreciate your time. Thank you for your advice.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:11 p.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. The Office of the Press Secretary

also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

### **Remarks on the Picturing America Initiative**

*February 26, 2008*

Thank you all for coming. Please be seated. Thank you. Welcome to the White House. Looks like we have a distinguished crowd here today. Most of you are renowned scholars, intellectuals, and writers. You've earned reputations for expressing man's noblest deeds and thoughts in pristine, eloquent English. Just like me. *[Laughter]*

Justice, thanks for coming. Appreciate you being here. I thank members of the Cabinet who have joined us. Ambassador, glad you're here.

I want to say a word about Bruce Cole. Bruce is an accomplished art historian, a good man, and he's been a great Chairman of the National Endowment of the Humanities.

Bruce understands what all of you understand: At their best, the arts and humanities express the ideals that define our Nation. The United States is a country defined not by bloodline, race, or creed but by our character and convictions. We are united by an unyielding principle, and that is, all men are created equal. We firmly believe that each man and woman has the right to make the most of their God-given talents. And we believe that all are endowed with the divine gift of freedom.

These ideals have sustained us throughout the centuries, and as a new generation is called to defend the principles of our democracy, they must understand why these principles are worthy of effort and sacrifice.

The National Endowment for the Humanities is at the forefront of this vital educational mission. One way the endowment fulfills this mission is through the "We the People" program, which we established in 2002 to address gaps in our children's knowledge of history and civics.

In just 5 years, the program has awarded nearly 1,400 grants to projects that preserve historical sites, documents, and artifacts and train future historians. In partnership with

the American Library Association, "We the People" has produced an annual bookshelf on enduring American themes such as courage and freedom. More than 6,000 sets of these books have been provided to schools and public libraries across the country.

"We the People" teacher workshops have allowed thousands of educators to discover American history in places where history was made, Ellis Island or the waters of Pearl Harbor. The initiative's National Digital Newspaper Program is making millions of pages of historic American newspapers accessible online. Countless students and teachers and historians will benefit from these important first drafts of history.

In all these ways, "We the People" does an outstanding job of passing America's rich heritage on to future generations. Today I'm pleased to unveil a new project under this program, the Picturing America Initiative. This initiative will educate children about the great people and places and moments in our history using American art and masterpieces that depict them.

It's much better for us to hear about educational programs from someone who's probably more qualified than me—*[laughter]*—like a former teacher or a librarian. *[Laughter]* And so it's my honor to welcome Laura, the First Lady.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:47 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia; and Italy's Ambassador to the U.S. Giovanni Castellaneta. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

### **Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek of the Czech Republic and an Exchange With Reporters**

*February 27, 2008*

**President Bush.** We'll have opening statements, and then we'll accept two questions a side. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome. We value our friendship and our partnership with the people of the Czech Republic. I remember well my visit to your beautiful country.

We've had a significant discussion today. It turns out, the year eight is an important number in Czech history. And we're determined to make the year 2008 a strong chapter in our relationship. We view the Czech Republic as a strategic partner. We've discussed a variety of issues. I want to talk about two issues.

First, visa waiver—I've always felt our visa laws needed to change. I didn't like the idea that we treated our friends in the Czech Republic differently than other friends in Europe. There's new law in place, which requires leadership from the countries, such as the Czech Republic. And, Mr. Prime Minister, you and your Government are providing that leadership.

We signed an important memorandum of understanding. We were able to do so because your negotiators were very smart. They represented your people very well. We still have more work to do, but I'm confident we can get it done. And I hope the people of the Czech Republic understand that your Government and your country is ahead of the line of anybody else when it comes to a visa waiver program. And I congratulate you on your leadership.

Missile defense—it's in our interest to put defenses in place to deal with the true threats of the 21st century. Russia is not a threat to peace. Regimes that adhere to extremist ideologies who—which may have the capability of launching weapons to those of us who love freedom, they're the threats to peace. And a missile defense system is aimed to deal with those threats.

And of course, we want it in the context not only of a bilateral relationship but in the context of NATO. We're both strong partners of NATO. NATO has got to be in a position to deal with the true threats of the 21st century. And so we had a good discussion on this important issue.

In our discussions, I strongly respect the sovereignty of the Government of the Czech Republic. Where they have concerns, of course, we'll listen. And so I want to thank you for that. And at the same time, of course, we discussed very important research and development opportunities, defense cooperation activities.

And finally, I thank the Prime Minister for the courage and sacrifice of the troops that are in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Prime Minister said that there will be a reduction in troops in Iraq, and I fully understand that. After all, we're reducing our troops based upon success. And I thank your willingness to send troops into Afghanistan. It makes sense to help young democracies thrive. They will look back at these decisions, Mr. Prime Minister, and say, thank goodness for the peace that prevailed as a result of the hard decisions we made today.

And I welcome you. You're welcome. Thank you for coming.

**Prime Minister Topolánek.** Okay. Well, I think that President Bush already mentioned everything that I wanted to mention originally. However, let me revisit or come back to the issue of number eight and its importance in our history. Number eight played a very important, nay, a key role in the history of the Czech nation.

In 1918, when the first Czechoslovak republic was founded, it was founded with help and assistance from the American President, Woodrow Wilson. Unfortunately, 1938, which was the time of the Munich agreement, the Americans were not with us, and therefore, it was an unfortunate year. Similarly, as 1948—we commemorated 60 years since the coup d'état of the Communists in 1948 just on the 25th of February. In 1968, the Prague Spring has occurred, and unfortunately, after a few months of relative liberty and freedom, we were occupied by the Soviet armies.

So what I want to say is, in terms of these number eight years, it was always very important for the Czech Republic, nay, even decisive, whether we were with the Americans or whether we were on our own. And I really wish that the year 2008 will become a similarly important year both for the Czech Republic and also for the United States of America and our mutual relationship.

And I believe that stationing the missile defense system in our country is, in terms of its importance, similarly important to those events I've been just mentioning in relation to the number eight in our history.

And everybody is, of course, interested to find out whether an agreement has been already done. There are only three words remaining to be resolved and discussed. [Laughter] But sometimes one word matters a lot, and sometimes an agreement might fail just because of one word. But this is not the case. These are just minor details, and I'm sure that we're going to finalize it very soon.

And in terms of the Visa Waiver Program, I would like to use this opportunity and thank President Bush for his efforts. And I very much appreciate when a politician or a person says something or promises something and he also delivers on this promise. And this is the case.

So I would like to thank President Bush for his leadership, but I also would like this leadership to become his ownership. [Laughter] And of course, there are many politicians in the world, but there are very few politicians who are real statesmen. To have one's principles, to stick to those principles irrespective of—to go against all odds and adhere to those principles, this is what only very few people can do. We've not spoken about this extensively, but this is what I appreciate the most.

What I believe is of—also of equally significant importance is the starting of the strategic dialog between the two countries, between the U.S. and the Czech Republic. And I think the outcome of these negotiations is also very good. Both countries—we agreed on research and development in the area of missile defense and, generally, in the defense systems.

Just one marginal note on the Visa Waiver Program and process. I think that the negotiations have been really tough, and the result achieved is a true breakthrough, a breakthrough moment. I think that this is a great achievement because first, we joined the Schengen zone, which enabled the Czech citizens to travel from Lisbon as far as Vilnius without the use of any passport or ID. And we did the same for our citizens, in terms of traveling to Canada and the United States of America. So we guaranteed one of the basic human rights, which is freedom of movement.

We, at the same time, are fully aware of the risks and dangers of security nature

which exist all over the world. And therefore, we want to guarantee higher security to our nation. And also, the agreement takes into consideration the reciprocal principle—the principle of reciprocity.

I also would like to mention that a great deal of our discussion revolved around issues of human rights—

**President Bush.** Yes.

**Prime Minister Topolánek.** —in the world. We spoke about Cuba. We spoke about the recent events and our hope for the future. And we also talked about other countries which so far have not been so fortunate to live in freedom like the Czech Republic.

I'm personally very happy from this meeting. I would like to thank President Bush for his openness and for this wonderful meeting. Thank you very much.

**President Bush.** Thank you. Good job. A couple of questions. Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press]. One second, please.

**Q.** Thank you, sir.

**President Bush.** Jennifer.

### **Missile Defense System**

**Q.** Can you elaborate a little on what's holding up an agreement on the missile defense? And how close are you to getting an agreement with the Polish Government as well?

**President Bush.** Well, I appreciate that. Obviously, this is a complicated issue that requires the United States, one, to make the case of why a missile defense is needed in the first place; that it is aimed to bring stability to Europe; that it's important for mutual security; that it fits into the concept of NATO and will honor the sovereignty of the Czech Republic or Poland.

And so the discussions revolve around a status-of-forces-type agreement, which requires understanding by the Czech Government of exactly what is meant when it talks about stationing a radar site. We will be coming to their country—under what conditions? How will people conduct themselves? And these are all very legitimate questions that the Prime Minister is asking. The same questions are being asked in Poland.

And I explained to the Prime Minister the following thing: People are wondering, well,

is this aimed at Russia? Is this an anti-Russian system? And the answer is, of course not. The system we're developing will be able to deal with one, two, or three types of incoming missiles. Russia could overwhelm a system like this. This is a system to deal with threats that will be evolving in the 21st century.

And so the Prime Minister made it very clear, when it comes to the Russian issue, that his Government will be making the decisions about any so-called presence. Do we want the Russians to be able to—you know, allay their fears by understanding what's going on? And of course, we do. But he made it clear to me that the Czech Republic will be making the decisions about who gets to come into their country. And I fully understand that.

And so, you know, there's a lot of discussions going on. These aren't easy agreements to put in place, but we feel optimistic that we will get this done. As the Prime Minister said, we're down to a couple of words. What you probably want to know is the three words. I'm not going to tell you. [Laughter] I am not going to tell you; that's five words. I tell you, I'm not going to do the three. [Laughter]

**Q.** How close are you, sir? How close are you to—

**President Bush.** Close. Three words is close. We started off with a blank page, and now we're down to three words. But, anyway—look, there is a will to get this done for the sake of mutual security and for the sake of peace.

**Prime Minister Topolanek.** Just to be more specific regarding these three words or outstanding issue—

**President Bush.** Wait a minute; you're making me look bad here. [Laughter]

**Prime Minister Topolanek.** It actually relates to environmental protection and the standards that should be adopted. So we're actually looking for the standards, which would be the strictest possible standards, to be applied in terms of ensuring and guaranteeing environmental protection. But that's just a technical matter which is going to be resolved very soon. It's not any problem.

**President Bush.** Yes. Why don't you call on somebody from your press corps, if you care to. You call on someone.

#### **Missile Defense System/Russia**

**Q.** Mr. President, would it be acceptable for the United States to have the radar in the Czech Republic without interceptors in Poland, should that—

**President Bush.** I don't see how. You've got to have interceptors in order to make this system work. The idea is to use a radar system to detect a launch headed toward NATO countries, and then shoot the thing down. And in order to make this system work, there has to be an integrated system.

And of course, what we will work to do is, one, make this system effective, integrated, comprehensive. And the interesting opportunity is for Russia to realize the benefits of such a system by extending the radar coverage into their country, because they will be under the same threat of radicalism that we will be—we collectively.

If some of these countries develop a weapon that's capable of developing a nuclear warhead, free nations, nations such as Russia, do not want to be in a position of political blackmail. And our job as leaders is to deal with the issues of the day, but also deal with the issues of tomorrow in a way that yields a peaceful world. And that's what we're doing.

Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

#### **Kosovo Independence/Intelligence Reform Legislation**

**Q.** Mr. President, thank you. You—I have a national security question in two parts. You just talked about the importance of stability in Europe. How does it serve our national security to support the redrawing of borders in Europe vis-a-vis Kosovo?

And secondly, can you say how has our national security actually been degraded by the lapse of FISA?

**President Bush.** First, let me talk about Kosovo. We discussed Kosovo. As a consequence of the war that took place during the leaders—during the tenure of Mr. Milosevic, one of the effects has been the desire for the—those of us in the United Nations to promote what's called the Ahtisaari

plan, which is a supervised, independent Kosovo.

This is a difficult issue, and I understand it's a difficult issue. But the U.S. Government supports this supervised independence. We believe in free societies, and we believe it will eventually lead to peace. But there's no—no border has been withdrawn in that sense, Stretch. It's a—Kosovo is a—Kosovo itself's borders have been clearly defined. The type of government has changed. Now, as part of the Ahtisaari plan, we fully expect this independent Kosovo to honor minority rights within their borders. And so my—our position has been clear.

Secondly, you asked about whether or not the United States of America should be able to listen to terrorists' phone calls coming into the United States. And the answer is, absolutely we should be doing this. There is still an extremist threat. People still want to attack our country, and we better understand what they're thinking and what they're planning and who they're talking to.

And yet, unfortunately, a law passed to give our professionals the tools has expired. And it's expired because people want to take class-action lawsuits against private phone carriers and other companies that have—were believed to have helped us protect America. It's not fair to say to a company that was believed to have helped us, it's important for you to help us, and then you get sued for billions of dollars. And such a policy would make it very difficult to get companies to fully cooperate with us in the future.

The law is expired, but my fellow citizens must understand, the threat to America has not expired. And our citizens who are paying attention to this debate must understand, without law, America will be more vulnerable to attack. Democrats and Republicans supported this law, and the House leaders must bring it to the floor, where it will pass with both Republican and Democrat vote. And if this law is allowed to expire, America will be more vulnerable. And that is inexcusable, and it's indefensible.

#### **Czech Opposition Leaders' Visit to Syria**

[At this point, a reporter asked a question in Czech, and no translation was provided.]

**Prime Minister Topolánek.** Well, actually, I think the same as you think. Well, if he traveled with Mr. Zaorálek—together with Mr. Zaorálek, then I think it is unforgivable.

Well, first of all, I would like to say that these activities of the opposition leaders and their foreign policy does not really serve the interests of our country. And I would like to remind you that when I was in the opposition—and we were in the opposition—we never created any kind of foreign policy on our own. And therefore, I understand the reasons for this visit to Syria. I would be much happier if they traveled as tourists and nothing else.

I would like to actually mention that I got this present from the state Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Gutierrez. It is a bracelet, and there is a simple word on it, which is *cambio*, meaning “change.” And in Cuba, you can actually get arrested for wearing this bracelet. But when I come back home, I will wear this just for the sake of Mr. Paroubek and Mr. Zaorálek. [Laughter]

**President Bush.** Thank you. Thank you all.

**Prime Minister Topolánek.** Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:54 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland, United Nations Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process for Kosovo. Prime Minister Topolánek referred to Parliament Member Lubomír Zaorálek and Leader of the Opposition Jiří Paroubek of the Czech Republic. Prime Minister Topolánek spoke in Czech, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

#### **Remarks Following a Meeting With Special Envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference Sada Cumber and an Exchange With Reporters**

February 27, 2008

**The President.** A while ago, I announced that I would be naming a Presidential Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Conference, and I am pleased to announce it's Sada

Cumber. He's a very successful businessman, a person who knows the Islamic world. He's agreed to serve in that capacity, and, Sada, I want to thank you very much.

We just had a discussion about his mission. And the core of his mission is to explain to the Islamic world that America is a friend—is a friend of freedom, is a friend of peace, that we value religion, that—matter of fact, we value it to the point where we believe that anybody should be able to worship the way they see fit, and we respect that.

And his is an important job. There's a lot of misperceptions about America, and Sada is going to be a part of our effort to explain the truth. And when people hear the truth about America, when they know that we're a land full of compassionate people and that we value other people's opinions, that they'll slowly but surely begin to better appreciate.

Now, a lot of people love America; don't get me wrong. After all, there's a lot of people trying to come here because of what we stand for. But we've got work to do in certain areas. And I can't thank you enough for going and really will strongly support you in your work.

**Special Envoy Cumber.** Thank you.

**The President.** Thank you very much, sir.

**William F. Buckley, Jr.**

**Q.** Any thoughts on Buckley?

**The President.** I just had the—I just hung up with Christopher Buckley, the son of William F. Buckley. I expressed Laura and my sadness over the passage of this very important figure in American political thought. He was a great author, a great wit, and a leader. And Chris said that his dad died at his desk. And I asked whether it had been a—I know it's a painful experience for Chris's heart, but he said that his dad died a peaceful death. And we got to thank God for that and thank God for his life.

**Q.** Did you talk to him much during this—[inaudible]—sir?

**Q.** You once said Buckley moved conservatism into the Oval Office, that he moved conservatism from the margins of American society into the Oval Office.

**The President.** No question, he was a—one of the great political thinkers. He influenced a lot of people, including me. And he

was—I can remember those debates they had on TV. And he was so articulate, and he captured the imagination of a lot of folks because he was—he had a great way of defining the issues. It was erudite, and yet a lot of folks from different walks of life could understand it. And he's a big figure in our history, and he'll be missed. And we ask for God's blessings on his soul. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:01 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

## Remarks Honoring the 2007 World Series Champion Boston Red Sox

February 27, 2008

**The President.** Welcome. Thank you for coming. Please be seated. So Tim Wakefield's batterymate is Doug Mirabelli; mine is the Vice President. [Laughter] We're glad you all are here. The mighty Red Sox Nation has stormed the South Lawn.

It's my honor to welcome the owners of the Red Sox. The principal owner is John Henry. Tom Werner is the chairman—and my longtime buddy Larry Lucchino. We appreciate the other owners who are here as well. I'm proud to be here with Terry Francona; the captain of the mighty Red Sox, Jason Varitek; the MVP of the World Series, Mike Lowell. They're mentioned because I'm trying to entice a gift out of them. [Laughter]

We appreciate very much members of the administration who are here. Don't linger. [Laughter] Welcome the Members of the United States Congress—Massachusetts and Connecticut and probably Rhode Island and—[applause]—yes. [Laughter] Thanks for coming.

I'm real proud for the Red Sox baseball club, its players, the players' families, all those associated with this unbelievably successful franchise. You know, you've—Red Sox Nation extends beyond the South Lawn, extends beyond New England. It obviously goes to the Caribbean and even the Far East. And so we welcome Japan's Daisuke here to the South Lawn. His press corps is bigger than mine. [Laughter] And we both have



trouble answering questions in English. [Laughter]

Two thousand seven was an unforgettable season—fast start, hung on in the end, swept the Angels, had a little trouble with the Indians, but battled back from what a lot of folks were saying sure defeat, and you took on Colorado and swept them. Like, you're 8-0 in the World Series. And I appreciate the fact that, as I mentioned, Mike Lowell put on an outstanding performance. But it was a team effort that brought the Red Sox here.

I love the fact that you've got some of the game's biggest stars. I mean, Big Papi, the guy lights up the screen. He brings a great personality to it. I'm sorry his running mate, Manny Ramirez, isn't here. I guess his grandmother died again. [Laughter] Just kidding. [Laughter] Tell Manny I didn't mean it. But I do want to quote him. He said, "When you don't feel good and you still get hits, that's when you know you're a bad man." [Laughter] I don't know what that means. [Laughter] But if bad man means good hitter, he's a really bad man, because he was clutch in the World Series and clutch in the playoffs, as was my fellow Texan, Josh Beckett. Man, you're looking sharp.

**Josh Beckett.** A lot better than last time?

**The President.** Spring, Texas?

**Mr. Beckett.** Yes.

**The President.** Spring, Texas. He's a big-game pitcher. He struck out—nine strikeouts a game in the playoffs. I appreciate very much that he works hard and throws hard and is a proven winner. And I guess he took some lessons from Curt Schilling, one of the great big-time pitchers.

You can't win the World Series without a good bullpen. I've got to make mention of a guy who is from my hometown of Midland, Texas—that would be Mike Timlin. Mike, good to see you again. You did not buy those glasses in Midland, Texas. [Laughter]

**Mike Timlin.** No. [Laughter]

**The President.** Yes. And how about Jonathan Papelbon? The guy pitches almost as well as he dances. [Laughter] And I appreciate the dress code. Thanks for wearing pants. [Laughter] Good job, and congratulations.

I do want to congratulate the ownership and the front office. This is a club that was wise enough to maintain a core of players that knew how to win. Varitek, Mirabelli, Ortiz, Ramirez, Schilling, Youkilis, Timlin, and Wakefield were all members of the 2004 championship team, and they provided the nucleus to bring some new players and some young players along. I bet you Dustin Pedroia, the American League Rookie of the Year, would tell you it makes a big difference. It makes a big difference to be hanging out with people who know how to win.

And so the ownership gets a lot of credit, the front office gets credit, and so does a really fine manager in Terry Francona. Laura and I had the honor of having Mike Lowell and Mrs. Francona and Terry for dinner earlier this month—earlier this year. And what I was impressed about was the values of this guy and the fact that he honors his family as the first and foremost thing in his life. And I think the ownership made a good deal in signing him to a new contract.

I appreciate the fact the team has overcome adversity. All of America, whether you're a Red Sox fan or not, was moved by the Jon Lester story. Jon had a decisive victory over cancer and in the World Series. And it was an inspiration to a lot of folks who were looking at this good man to determine whether they, themselves, could overcome adversity. And so, Jon, we want to thank you and congratulate you.

I don't know if you know this or not, but these good folks are headed to Walter Reed after this celebration, and I—[applause]. These champs have got a chance to bring some joy in somebody's heart, and I want to thank you for really honoring the true heroes of the United States of America, and those are those who wear the uniform of our country. And I'm really thankful you're going.

I appreciate the work of the Red Sox Foundation and the Jimmy Fund. These are long-lasting charities that this club is committed to, to help improve people's lives. You can be a champion on the field, and you can be a champion off the field. And a lot of these players are champions off the field.

And I thank you for your commitment. I thank you for your dedication to a great sport.

I congratulate and thank your families for hanging in with you in this long, 162-game season. I wish you all the best in the upcoming year, and it's my great honor to welcome you back to the White House as the World Series champs.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:08 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Tim Wakefield, Daisuke Matsuzaka, Josh Beckett, Curt Schilling, Mike Timlin, Jonathan Papelbon, and Jon Lester, pitchers, Doug Mirabelli and Jason Varitek, catchers, Larry Lucchino, president and chief executive officer, Terry Francona, manager, Mike Lowell, Kevin Youkilis, and Dustin Pedroia, infielders, David A. "Big Papi" Ortiz, designated hitter, and Manny Ramirez, outfielder, Boston Red Sox; and Jacque Francona, wife of Terry Francona.

### **Statement on the Death of William F. Buckley, Jr.**

*February 27, 2008*

America has lost one of its finest writers and thinkers. Bill Buckley was one of the great founders of the modern conservative movement. He brought conservative thought into the political mainstream and helped lay the intellectual foundation for America's victory in the cold war and for the conservative movement that continues to this day. He will be remembered for his principled thought and beautiful writing, as well as his personal warmth, wit, and generous spirit. His legacy lives on in the ideas he championed and in the magazine he founded, *National Review*.

Laura and I send our prayers to Chris Buckley, the Buckley family, and all who loved this good man.

### **The President's News Conference**

*February 28, 2008*

**The President.** Good morning. Laura and I, as you know, recently came back from Africa, where we saw firsthand how the Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is saving lives. I had a chance to go to the—speak to the Sullivan Foundation the other day about our trip, and the reason I did so was to remind the American people about how important it is for our Nation to remain generous and

compassionate when it comes to helping people overseas.

I also, during my trip, urged Congress to reauthorize the emergency plan and increase our commitment, and they did. They approved a good, bipartisan bill that maintains the principles that have made this program effective. And so I want to thank Acting Chairman Howard Berman and Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and all the members of the committee for the action they took. This afternoon they're going to come down, and I'll be able to thank them in person. And I'm going to brief them on the trip. The—obviously, our hope is now that the House will act quickly and send the bill reauthorizing PEPFAR to the Senate. And I'd like to sign it into law as quickly as possible.

Members should also act on a very urgent priority, and that is to pass legislation our intelligence officials need to quickly and effectively monitor terrorist communications. At issue is a dispute over whether telecommunications companies should be subjected to class-action lawsuits because they are believed to have helped defend America after the attacks of 9/11. Allowing these lawsuits to proceed would be unfair. If any of these companies helped us, they did so after being told by our Government that their assistance was legal and vital to our national security.

Allowing the lawsuits to proceed could aid our enemies because the litigation process could lead to the disclosure of information about how we conduct surveillance, and it would give Al Qaida and others a roadmap as to how to avoid the surveillance. Allowing these lawsuits to proceed could make it harder to track the terrorists because private companies besieged by and fearful of lawsuits would be less willing to help us quickly get the information we need. Without the cooperation of the private sector, we cannot protect our country from terrorist attack.

Protecting these companies from lawsuits is not a partisan issue. Republicans and Democrats in the United States Senate came together and passed a good bill protecting private companies from these abusive lawsuits. And Republicans and Democrats in the House stand ready to pass the Senate bill

if House leaders would only stop blocking an up-or-down vote and let the majority in the House prevail.

Some in Congress have said we have nothing to worry about because if we lose the cooperation of the private sector, we can use the old FISA law. Well, they're wrong. FISA was out of date. It did not allow us to track foreign terrorists on foreign soil quickly and effectively. And that is why a dangerous intelligence gap opened up last year, and that is why Congress passed legislation that reformed FISA. But they did so only temporarily. The law expired; the threat to America has not expired.

Congress understood last year that FISA did not give our intelligence professionals the tools they needed to keep us safe. The Senate understands that the FISA—old FISA didn't give us the tools needed to protect America. The bipartisan bill it passes provides those tools our intelligence professionals need. Yet the House's failure to pass this law raises the risk of reopening a gap in our intelligence gathering, and that is dangerous.

Another vital priority for protecting the nation is prevailing in Iraq. Unfortunately, this week, the Senate debated yet another bill that threatens to cut off funding and tie the hands of our commanders in Iraq. It seems that no matter what happens in Iraq, opponents to the war have one answer: retreat.

When things were going badly in Iraq a year ago, they called for withdrawal. Then we changed our strategy, launched the surge, and turned the situation around. Since the surge began, high-profile terrorist attacks are down, civilian deaths are down, sectarian killings are down, and our own casualties are down. U.S. and Iraqi forces have captured or killed thousands of extremists, including hundreds of key Al Qaeda operatives and leaders. Reconciliation is taking place in local communities across the country. That reconciliation is beginning to translate into political progress in the capital city.

In the face of these changes on the ground, congressional leaders are still sounding the same old call for withdrawal. I guess you could say that when it comes to pushing for withdrawal, their strategy is to stay the course. It's interesting that many of the same people who once accused me of refusing to

acknowledge setbacks in Iraq now are the ones who are refusing to acknowledge progress in Iraq.

If we followed their advice a year ago, Iraq would be far different and more dangerous place than it is today, and the American people would be at greater risk. If we follow their advice now, we would put at risk the gains our troops have made over the past year. Congress does need to act when it comes to Iraq. What they need to do is stand by our brave men and women in uniform and fully fund the troops.

Finally, Congress needs to act to help homeowners avoid foreclosure. Unfortunately, the Senate is considering legislation that would do more to bail out lenders and speculators than to help American families keep their homes. The Senate bill would actually prolong the time it takes for the housing market to adjust and recover, and it would lead to higher interest rates. This would be unfair to the millions of homeowners who make the hard choices every month to pay their mortgage on time, and it would be unfair to future home buyers. Instead, Congress should move ahead with responsible legislation to modernize the Federal Housing Administration and Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. By taking these steps, we can help struggling homeowners and help our economy weather the difficult time in the housing market.

I'd be glad to take some questions. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

### **National Economy**

**Q.** Mr. President, bad economic news continues to pile up, the latest today with the GDP barely growing. Are you concerned that a sagging economy and hard times will help defeat John McCain like it did your father in 1992? And how far are you willing to go to prevent that?

**The President.** I'm concerned about the economy because I'm concerned about working Americans, concerned about people who want to put money on the table and save for their kids' education. That's why I'm concerned about the economy. I want Americans working.

And there's no question, the economy has slowed down. You just cited another example

of slowdown. I don't think we're headed to a recession, but no question, we're in a slowdown. And that's why we acted, and acted strongly, with over \$150 billion worth of progrowth economic incentives, mainly money going into the hands of our consumers and some money going to incent businesses to invest, which will create jobs.

And so we acted robustly. And now it's time to determine whether or not this progrowth package will actually work. Now, the checks will start going out in the second week of May. There are going to be letters out soon explaining who is eligible for the refunds. Credit will happen in the first week of May. In other words, some people will choose to have their bank accounts credited. And in the second week of May, we anticipate the checks start moving out of Washington.

And the purpose is to encourage our consumers. The purpose is to give them money—their own to begin with, by the way—but give them money to help deal with the adverse effects of the decline in housing value. Consumerism is a significant part of our GDP growth. And we want to sustain the American consumer, encourage the American consumer, and at the same time, we want to encourage investment. So we'll see how the plan works.

**Q.** But the political context—

**The President.** Oh, you're trying to get me to be the pundit again. Look, you all figure that out. I mean, we—what I'm dealing with is the situation at hand, and I appreciate that—both Democrats and Republicans in the United States Congress and Senate for getting this bill done very quickly. And it's a substantial piece of legislation, and it's a good sign that we can figure out how to cooperate with each other at times.

And so we'll see the effects of this progrowth package. It's—I know there's a lot of—here in Washington, people are trying to—stimulus package two and all that stuff. Why don't we let stimulus package one, which seemed like a good idea at the time, have a chance to kick in?

Yes.

### **Turkey and Iraq**

**Q.** Mr. President, Turkey's ground offensive in northern Iraq is now a week old with no end in sight. How quickly would you like to see Turkey end its offensive, its incursion? And do you have any concerns about the possibility of protracted presence in northern Iraq causing further destabilization in the region?

**The President.** A couple of points on that—one, the Turks, the Americans, and the Iraqis, including the Iraqi Kurds, share a common enemy in the PKK. And secondly, it's in nobody's interests that there be safe haven for people who are—have the willingness to kill innocent people.

A second point I want to make to you, Matt [Matthew Spetalnick, Reuters], is that there is a Special Forces presence in northern Iraq, in Kurdistan, now, apart from what you're referring to. In other words—so there is a presence, and there has been a presence for a while.

Thirdly, I strongly agree with the sentiments of Secretary Gates, who said that the incursion must be limited and must be temporary in nature. In other words, it shouldn't be long-lasting. But the Turks need to move quickly, achieve their objective, and get out.

**Q.** But how quickly, sir, do they need to move out?

**The President.** You know, as quickly as possible.

**Q.** Days or weeks?

**The President.** Well, as possible.

### **Russia-U.S. Relations**

**Q.** Mr. President, I'd like to ask you about Russia. The Democratic candidates, when asked about the new Russian leader, Dmitry Medvedev, didn't appear to know a great deal about him. I wonder what you can say about him, how much power you think he's really got with Putin still in the picture?

And critics would say you badly misjudged Vladimir Putin. So what would be your cautionary tale to your successor about the threat Russia poses and how to deal with this new leader?

**The President.** I don't know much about Medvedev either. And what will be interesting to see is who comes to the—who represents Russia at the G-8, for example. It

will be interesting to see—it will help, I think, give some insight as to how Russia intends to conduct foreign policy over—after Vladimir Putin's Presidency. And I can't answer the question yet.

I can say that it's in our interests to continue to have relations with Russia. For example, on proliferation matters, it's in our interest to be able to make sure that materials that could cause great harm aren't proliferated. It's in our interest to work together on Iran. As I said, I think, in this room the last time I was here, I appreciated the fact that Vladimir Putin told the Iranians that they will provide—they, Russia—will provide enriched uranium to run the Bushehr powerplant, thereby negating the need for the Iranians to enrich in the first place. I thought that was a constructive suggestion. And we need to be in a position to be able to work with Russia on Iran.

There's a lot of areas where—yesterday, for example, with the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, I talked about a missile defense system in Europe. But I believe it's in our interests to try to figure out a way for the Russians to understand the system is not aimed at them but aimed at the real threats of the 21st century, which could be a launch from a violent regime—a launch of a weapon of mass destruction.

So there's areas, David [David Gregory, NBC News], where we need to cooperate and—let me finish—and so it's a—I'm going to try to leave it so whoever my successor is will be able to have a relationship with whoever is running foreign policy in Russia. It's just—it's in the country's interest. That doesn't mean we have to agree all the time. I mean, obviously, we didn't agree on Kosovo. There will be other areas where we don't agree. And yet it is in the interest of the country to have a relationship, leader to leader and hopefully beyond that.

**Q.** But I mean, first of all, are you suggesting or are you worried that, in fact, Medvedev is a puppet for Vladimir Putin? And—

**The President.** No, I wouldn't say that. I wouldn't—that's your conclusion, not mine.

**Q.** Well, no, I'm asking the question about whether you're concerned. But isn't there something you took away and that you can

offer to your successor about how it's risky in the process of sizing up your Russian counterpart? Don't you think that you learned something from your time with Putin?

**The President.** Here's what I learned—here's what I learned. I learned that it's important to establish a personal relations with leaders even though you may not agree with them—certain leaders. I'm not going to have a personal relationship with Kim Jong Il, and our relationships are such that that's impossible.

But U.S.-Russian relations are important. It's important for stability. It's important for our relations in Europe. And therefore, my advice is to establish a personal relationship with whoever is in charge of foreign policy in Russia. It's in our country's interest to do so.

Now, it makes it easier, by the way, when there's a trustworthy relationship to be able to disagree and yet maintain common interests in other areas. And so we've had our disagreements. As you know, Putin is a straightforward, pretty tough character when it comes to his interests. Well, so am I. And we've had some head-butts, diplomatic head-butts. You might remember the trip to Slovakia. I think you were there at the famous press conference. But—and yet, in spite of that, our differences of opinion, we still have got a cordial enough relationship to be able to deal with common threats and opportunities. And that's going to be important for the next President to maintain.

Yes, Jonathan [Jonathan Karl, ABC News].

### **War on Terror in Iraq**

**Q.** Mr. President—

**The President.** Yes, Jon.

**Q.** —do you believe if we had the kind of rapid pullout from Iraq that the Democrats are talking about, that we'd be at greater risk of a terrorist attack here at home? And when Senator Obama was asked a similar question, he said, quote, "If Al Qaida is forming a base in Iraq, then we will have to act in a way that secures the American homeland and our interests abroad."

So I'm wondering if you—

**The President.** That's an interesting comment. If Al Qaida is securing a Al Qaida base—yes, well, that's exactly what they've

been trying to do for the past 4 years. That's their stated intention, was to create enough chaos and disorder to establish a base from which to either launch attacks or spread a caliphate. And the intent of the surge was to send more marines into the area that—where they had proclaimed their desire to set up a base. That was Anbar Province. And so, yes, I mean, that's one of the challenges we face, is denying Al Qaida a safe haven anywhere. And their intentions—that's what they said, that they would like to have a base or safe haven in Anbar Province.

Yes, Bill [Bill Plante, CBS News].

**Q.** But to the second part—

**The President.** No, next turn.

**Q.** But the part of the question about—

**The President.** Nice try. [Laughter]

**Q.** Mr. President—

**The President.** You obviously haven't been here long, Jon. Where have you been, Jonathan? [Laughter]

**Q.** Across the river.

**The President.** Yes, okay, yes.

**Q.** All right.

**The President.** Welcome to the other side. [Laughter]

### ***Terrorist Surveillance Program/ Intelligence Reform Legislation***

**Q.** If you can get the Congress to protect telecom companies from lawsuits, then there's no recourse for Americans who feel that they've been caught up in this. I know it's not intended to spy on Americans, but in the collection process, information about everybody gets swept up, and then it gets sorted. So if Americans don't have any recourse, are you just telling them when it comes to their privacy to suck it up?

**The President.** The—I wouldn't put it that way, if I were you, in public, Bill. I mean, you've been around long enough to—anyway, yes, I—look, there's—people who analyze the program fully understand that America's civil liberties are well protected. There is a constant check to make sure that our civil liberties of our citizens aren't—you know, are treated with respect. And that's what I want, and that's what most—all Americans want.

Now, let me talk about the phone companies. You cannot expect phone companies to participate if they feel like they're going to

be sued. I mean, it is—these people are responsible for shareholders; they're private companies. The Government said to those who have alleged to have helped us that it is in our national interests, and it's legal. It's in our national interests because we want to know who's calling who from overseas into America. We need to know in order to protect the people.

It was legal. And now, all of a sudden, plaintiffs' attorneys, class-action plaintiffs' attorneys, you know—I don't want to try to get inside their head; I suspect they see, you know, a financial gravy train—are trying to sue these companies. And first, it's unfair. It is patently unfair. And secondly, these lawsuits create doubts amongst those who will—whose help we need.

I guess you could be relaxed about all this if you didn't think there was a true threat to the country. I know there's a threat to the country. And the American people expect our Congress to give the professionals the tools they need to listen to foreigners who may be calling into the United States with information that could cause us great harm. So, on the one hand, the civil liberties of our citizens are guaranteed by a lot of checks in the system and scrutinized by the United States Congress.

And secondly, I cannot emphasize to you how important it is that the Congress solve this problem. The Senate has solved the problem. And people say, would you ever compromise on the issue? The Senate bill is a compromise. And there's enough votes in the House of Representatives to pass the Senate bill. It's a bipartisan bill. And the House leaders need to put it on the floor. Let the will of the House work. In my judgment, it happens to be the will of the people to give the professionals the tools they need to protect the country.

Elaine [Elaine Quijano, Cable News Network].

### ***Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser***

**Q.** Mr. President, you've stressed over and over in recent days particularly the importance of FISA reform to help keep America safe, and yet you have not yet filled a key

national security post. Fran Townsend announced her resignation months ago, in November. What is the delay there, and what are Americans to make of that delay? Is America less safe because of it?

**The President.** We got a fine man named Joel Bagnal working that office right now. He's a professional. I trust his judgment. He's a real good guy. And no, they shouldn't worry about Joel. He knows what he's doing. John [John McKinnon, Wall Street Journal].

**Q.** But, sir, the American——

**The President.** John.

**Q.** The Homeland Security Adviser is a key post.

**Q.** Thank you, Mr. President.

**Q.** What's taking so long?

**The President.** Joel Bagnal has occupied the position, Elaine. He's doing the job, and I've got confidence in him. And so should the American people have confidence in him. He's a fine professional. He knows what he's doing. And I'm very comfortable in saying, on your cameras, that our staff in the White House, led by Joel Bagnal, knows what they're doing when it comes to advising the President on matters of homeland security. John.

### Trade

**Q.** Thanks, Mr. President. There's been a lot of criticism on the campaign trail of free-trade policies and even talk about the U.S. opting out of NAFTA. And it doesn't seem that you want to discuss the prospects of Republican candidates on the campaign trail this year, but——

**The President.** Not yet.

**Q.** Not yet. But just given all the concerns about the economy that people have, do you feel like you could win in a State like Ohio if you were running again for Presidency?

**The President.** Landslide, John. [Laughs] Look, I am a big believer in free trade. And the reason why is, I firmly believe that free trade is essential to the formation of high-paying, quality jobs. In other words, people who work for industries that export goods to overseas are likely to be paid more than their—other workers.

Secondly, if you look at the—our economic growth recently, particularly last year, a

major portion of that growth came as a result of exports. It's an essential part of our economic picture.

Yes, I heard the talk about NAFTA. One statistic I think people need to know is, I think there's roughly, like, \$380 billion worth of goods that we ship to our NAFTA partners on an annual basis. Now, \$380 billion worth of goods means there's a lot of farmers and businesses, large and small, who are benefiting from having a market in our neighborhood. And the idea of just unilaterally withdrawing from a trade treaty because of trying to score political points is not good policy. It's not good policy on the merits, and it's not good policy to—as a message to send to our—people who have, in good faith, signed a treaty and worked with us on a treaty.

Thirdly, those of us who grew up in Texas remember what the border looked like when we were kids, and it was really poor. And you go down to that border today, it is prosperous on both sides of the river, to the credit of those who proposed NAFTA and to the credit of those who got NAFTA through the Congress. If you're worried about people coming into our country illegally, it makes sense to help a place like Mexico grow its economy. Most folks would rather be finding a job close to home; most folks would rather not try to get in the bottom of an 18-wheeler to come and put food on the table.

This agreement has meant prosperity on both sides of our borders, north and south. And I believe it's in the interests to continue to seek markets for our farmers, ranchers, and businesspeople. I also know it's in our interest to insist that when people sell products into our countries, that we get treated fairly. In other words, if we treat a country one way—people in a country one way, we expect to be treated the same way—like Colombia.

The Colombia free trade vote's coming up. Many of their products come into our country much easier than our products go into theirs. It makes sense to be treated equally. But on this vote, there's an additional consequence. If the Congress rejects the Colombia free trade agreement, it will sorely affect the national security interests of the United States. It will encourage false populism in our

neighborhood. It will undermine the standing of courageous leaders like President Uribe. And I strongly urge the Congress, when they bring this—when the Colombia free trade agreement is brought to a vote, to seriously consider the consequences of rejecting this trade agreement.

Mike [Mike Emanuel, FOX News].

### ***Terrorist Surveillance Program/ Intelligence Reform Legislation***

**Q.** Mr. President, on FISA, do you worry that perhaps some House Democratic leaders are playing a high-stakes game of wait and see, in terms of if we get attacked, we all lose; if we don't get attacked, then maybe that makes the case that you don't need all the powers in FISA?

**The President.** No, I don't think so. I mean, I think that's—that would be ascribing motives that are just—I just don't think they're the motives of the House leaders to do that. I think—look, I think they're really wrestling with providing liability protection to phone companies. I don't think there's—that's cynical or devious, Michael. That's just too risky.

A lot of these leaders understand that there is an enemy that wants to attack. The caucus, evidently, in the House, is—the Democratic caucus is, you know, is concerned about exactly Plante's question, you know. And I just can't tell you how important it is to not alienate or not discourage these phone companies.

How can you listen to the enemy if the phone companies aren't going to participate with you? And they're not going to participate if they get sued. Let me rephrase: less likely to participate. And they're facing billions of dollars of lawsuits, and they have a responsibility to their shareholders. And yet they were told what they were going to do is legal.

And anyway, I'm going to keep talking about the issue, Mike. This is an important issue for the American people to understand. And it's important for them to understand that no renewal of the PATRIOT Act—I mean, the Protect America Act is dangerous for the security of the country, just dangerous.

I'm sure people, if they really pay attention to the details of this debate, wonder why it was okay to pass the Protect America Act last summer, late last summer, and all of a sudden, it's not okay to pass it now. And so I will keep talking about the issue and talking about the issue.

Michael [Mike Abramowitz, Washington Post].

### ***President's Foreign Policy***

**Q.** Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to ask you about another issue that's kind of come up on the campaign trail, in terms of discussion, which is—this is a point of view that has been espoused—that we would be better off if we talked to our adversaries, in particular, Iran and Cuba, you know, without preconditions. And as President, you have obviously considered and rejected this approach. And I'm wondering if you can give us a little bit of insight into your thinking about this, and just explain to the American people what is lost by talking with those when we disagree.

**The President.** What's lost by embracing a tyrant who puts his people in prison because of their political beliefs? What's lost is, it'll send the wrong message. It'll send a discouraging message to those who wonder whether America will continue to work for the freedom of prisoners. It'll give great status to those who have suppressed human rights and human dignity.

I'm not suggesting there's never a time to talk, but I'm suggesting now is not the time—not to talk with Raul Castro. He's nothing more than an extension of what his brother did, which was to ruin an island and imprison people because of their beliefs.

These wives of these dissidents come and see me, and their stories are just unbelievably sad. And it just goes to show how repressive the Castro brothers have been, when you listen to the truth about what they say. And the idea of embracing a leader who's done this without any attempt on his part to release prisoners and free their society would be counterproductive and send the wrong signal.

**Q.** But no one is saying embrace him; they're just saying talk—



**The President.** Well, talking to him is embracing. Excuse me. Let me use another word. You're right; embrace is like big hug, right? That's—you're looking—

**Q.** [Inaudible]

**The President.** I do embrace people. Mike, one of these days, I'm just thinking about—[laughter]. Right, okay, good. Thank you for reminding me to use a different word. Sitting down at the table, having your picture taken with a tyrant such as Raul Castro, for example, lends the status of the office and the status of our country to him. He gains a lot from it by saying, "Look at me; I'm now recognized by the President of the United States."

Now, somebody will say, well, I'm going to tell him to release the prisoners. Well, it's a theory that all you got to do is embrace, and these tyrants act. That's not how they act. That's not what causes them to respond. And so I made a decision quite the opposite, and that is to keep saying to the Cuban people, we stand with you. We will not sit down with your leaders that imprison your people because of what they believe. We will keep an embargo on you. We do want you to have money from people here in the homeland, but we will stay insistent upon this policy until you begin to get free.

And so that's the way I've conducted foreign policy and will continue to conduct foreign policy. I just remind people that the decisions of the U.S. President to have discussions with certain international figures can be extremely counterproductive. It can send chilling signals and messages to our allies; it can send confusion about our foreign policy; it discourages reformers inside their own country. And in my judgment, it would be a mistake—on the two countries you talked about.

Sheryl [Sheryl Gay Stolberg, New York Times].

### 2008 Presidential Elections

**Q.** Mr. President, thank you. I want to bring you back to Senator Obama's comment on Iraq. Do you believe that his comment was naïve?

**The President.** I believe Senator Obama better stay focused on his campaign with Senator Clinton, neither of whom has se-

cured their party's nominee yet—nomination yet. And my party's nomination hasn't been decided yet either. And so there will be ample time to discuss whoever their candidate for—the positions of whoever their candidate is.

Nice try, Sheryl. Would you like to try another tact, another question?

**Q.** Well, earlier you said it was an interesting comment. Okay, I'll follow on it. About Iraq, you have said in the past that you want to—

**Q.** Come on. [Laughter]

**Q.** —leave a sustainable policy.

**The President.** Yes.

**Q.** You said I could have another question.

**The President.** That's good. Yes, okay.

**Q.** If you want to leave your—

**The President.** Well, it was just a little, like—give her—should we vote on whether she gets another question? [Laughter]

### War on Terror in Iraq

**Q.** They're for me. [Laughter] You've said, Mr. President, that you want to leave Iraq in a sustainable situation—

**The President.** Yes, I do.

**Q.** —at the end of your administration. Can you describe for us specifically, what do you mean by sustainable? Do you have specific goals and objectives that, in your mind, would meet the criteria of sustainability?

**The President.** Yes, which is to keep enough troops there so we can succeed. And David Petraeus will come as—for example, David Petraeus will come back, along with Ryan Crocker, here later on this spring and will make a recommendation as to what that—what those troop levels ought to be.

The idea of having a request by the Iraqi Government for a long-term security agreement is part of sustainability. And obviously, we're going to be pushing hard at the same time to get the political process moving forward.

I don't know if you noticed yesterday, but it was a very interesting moment in Iraqi constitutional history, when part of the—a member of the Presidency Council utilized his constitutional right to veto one of the three pieces of legislation recently passed. I understand the use of the veto, intend to continue to use it, and I—but I thought it was a

healthy sign that the people are thinking through the legislation that's passed, and they're worrying about making sure that laws are constitutional. And I feel pretty good about the fact that they're, of course, going to continue to work to make sure that their stated objective of getting Provincial elections done by October of 2008 will happen.

So there's going to be a lot of work. My only point is, sustainability is political, economic, and security.

Yes, Ed [Ed Chen, Bloomberg News].

### **Monetary Policy**

**Q.** Good morning, sir.

**The President.** Yes, thank you.

**Q.** If I could get back to the economy—the GDP numbers today show that our economy is increasingly relying on U.S. exports to keep growing. How important is a competitive dollar in keeping U.S. exports strong and growing?

**The President.** We believe in a strong dollar policy, and we believe that—and I believe that our economy has got the fundamentals in place for us to be a—is to grow and continue growing more robustly, hopefully, than we're growing now. And the dollar—the value of the dollar will be reflected in the ability for our economy to be—to grow economically. And so we're still for a strong dollar.

**Q.** Can I follow up on that, sir?

### **Price of Gasoline/Taxes/Energy**

**The President.** Maybe.

**Q.** Thanks.

**The President.** I guess you are. Yes, I haven't said yes, but, please. [Laughter]

**Q.** What's your advice to the average American who is hurting now, facing the prospect of \$4 a gallon gasoline, a lot of people facing—

**The President.** Wait a minute. What did you just say? You're predicting \$4 a gallon gasoline?

**Q.** A number of analysts are predicting—

**The President.** Oh, yeah?

**Q.** —\$4 a gallon gasoline this spring when they reformulate.

**The President.** That's interesting. I hadn't heard that.

**Q.** Yes, sir.

**The President.** Yes. I know it's high now.

**Q.** And the other economic problems facing people—beyond your concern that you stated here and your expectations for these stimulus checks, what kind of hope can you offer to people who are in dire straits?

**The President.** Permanent tax—keep the tax cuts permanent, for starters. There's a lot of economic uncertainty. You just said that. You just said the price of gasoline may be up to \$4 a gallon—or some expert told you that—and that creates a lot of uncertainty. If you're out there wondering whether or not—you know, what your life is going to be like and you're looking at \$4 a gallon, that's uncertain. And when you couple that with the idea that taxes may be going up in a couple of years, that's double uncertainty. And therefore, one way to deal with uncertainty is for Congress to make the tax cuts permanent.

Secondly, it's—people got to understand that our energy policy needs to be focused on a lot of things: one, renewables, which is fine, which I strongly support, as you know; two, conservation. But we need to be finding more oil and gas at home if we're worried about becoming independent—dependent on oil overseas. And this—I view it as a transitory period to new technologies that'll change the way we live. But we haven't built a refinery in a long time. We're expanding refineries, but we haven't built a refinery in a long time. I strongly suggested to the Congress that we build refineries on old military bases, but, no, it didn't pass. But if you've got less supply of something as demand continues to stay steady or grow, your price is going to go up.

Secondly, on oil, we—the more oil we find at home, the better off we're going to be in terms of the short run. And yet our policy is, you know, let us not explore robustly in places like ANWR. And there are environmental concerns, and I understand that. I also know there's technologies that should mitigate these environmental concerns.

They got a bill up there in Congress now. Their attitude is, let's tax oil companies. Well, all that's going to do is make the price even higher. We ought to be encouraging investment in oil and gas close to home if we're

trying to mitigate the problems we face right now.

And so, yes, there's a lot of uncertainty, and I'm concerned about the uncertainty. Hopefully this progrowth package will help—this 100—I think it's \$147 billion that will be going out the door, starting electronically in the first week of May and through check in the second week of May. And the idea is to help our consumers deal with the uncertainty you're talking about. But, yes, no question about it; it's a difficult period.

Yes, Ken [Ken Herman, Cox News].

### **Presidential Library**

**Q.** Thank you, sir. Now that you've found a location for your Presidential library, you've got to find the money to build it. Reports indicate that you may be trying to collect as much as \$200 million. Is that figure accurate? Do you believe it's important for the American people to know who is giving that kind of money to their President? Will you disclose the contributions as they come in? And will you place any restriction on who gives money and how much they can give?

**The President.** No, yes, no, yes. [Laughter] Next question. [Laughter] I haven't—pew, man. You obviously haven't asked a question in a long time. It was like, you know—one, I haven't seen the final budget. Two, as Donnie Evans said, who is the chairman of the foundation, we'll look at the disclosure requirements and make a decision. Here's the—well, I—there's a lot of people—or some people; I shouldn't say a lot—some people who like to give and don't particularly want their names disclosed, whether it be for this foundation or any other foundation. And so we'll take that into consideration.

Thirdly—and what was the other?

**Q.** Any restrictions on who can give? Will you take foreign money for this?

**The President.** Yes, I'll probably take some foreign money, but don't know yet, Ken. We just haven't—we just announced the deal, and I, frankly, have been focused elsewhere, like on gasoline prices and, you know, my trip to Africa, and haven't seen the fundraising strategy yet. And so the answer to your question—really, I can't answer your question well.

**Q.** Where does the people's right to know this fit into all of that?

**The President.** You know, I don't—we're weighing, taking a look, taking consideration, giving it serious consideration. Nice try, though.

### **2008 Beijing Olympics/China/Human Rights**

Oliver [Oliver Knox, Agence France-Presse].

**Q.** Thank you, sir. In China, a former factory worker who says that human rights are more important than the Olympics is being tried for subversion. What message does it send that you're going to the Olympics? And do you think athletes there should be allowed to publicly express their dissent?

**The President.** Oliver, I have made it very clear, I'm going to the Olympics because it's a sporting event, and I'm looking forward to seeing the athletic competition. But that will not preclude me from meeting with the Chinese President, expressing my deep concerns about a variety of issues, just like I do every time I meet with the President.

And maybe I'm in a little different position. Others don't have a chance to visit with Hu Jintao, but I do. And every time I meet with him, I talk about religious freedom and the importance of China's society recognizing that if you're allowed to worship freely, it will benefit the society as a whole; that the Chinese Government should not fear the idea of people praying to a god as they see fit. A whole society, a healthy society, a confident society is one that recognizes the value of religious freedom.

I talk about Darfur and Iran and Burma. And so I am not the least bit shy of bringing up the concerns expressed by this factory worker. And I believe that I'll have an opportunity to do so with the President and, at the same time, enjoy a great sporting event. I'm a sports fan. I'm looking forward to the competition. And each Olympic society will make its own decision as to how to deal with the athletes.

Yes, Mark [Mark Smith, Associated Press Radio].

**Price of Oil/Tax Breaks for Oil Companies/Energy**

**Q.** Mr. President, back to the oil price—tax breaks that you were talking about a minute ago. Back when oil was \$55 a barrel, you said those tax breaks were not needed; people had plenty of incentive to drill for oil. Now the price of oil is \$100 a barrel, and you're planning to threaten a plan that would shift those tax breaks to renewables. Why, sir?

**The President.** I talked, Mark—I talked about some—some of the breaks. And this is a—this generally is a tax increase, and it doesn't make any sense to do it right now. We need to be exploring for more oil and gas. And taking money out of the coffers of the oil companies will make it harder for them to reinvest. I know they say, well, look at all of the profits. Well, we're raising the price of gasoline in a time when the price of gasoline is high.

Secondly, we've invested a lot of money in renewables. This administration has done more for renewables than any President. Now, we got a problem with renewables, and that is, the price of corn is beginning to affect food—cost of food, and it's hurting hog farmers and a lot of folks. And the best way to deal with renewables is to focus on research and development that will enable us to use other raw material to produce ethanol. I'm a strong believe in ethanol, Mark. This administration has got a great record on it. But it is a—I believe research and development is what's going to make renewable fuels more effective.

Again, I repeat: If you look at what's happened in corn out there, you're beginning to see the food issue and the energy issue collide. And so, to me, the best dollar spent is to continue to deal with cellulosic ethanol in order to deal with this bottleneck right now. And secondly, the tax—yes, I said that a while ago, on certain aspects. But the way I analyze this bill is, it's going to cost the consumers more money. And we need more oil and gas being explored for; we need more drilling; we need less dependence on foreign oil.

And as I say, we're in a period of transition here in America, from a time where we were—where we are oil and gas dependent

to, hopefully, a time where we got electric automobiles, and we're spending money to do that; a time when we're using more biofuels, and we've taken huge investments in that; a time when we've got nuclear powerplants and we're able to deal with the disposal in a way that brings confidence to the American people—so we're not dependent on natural gas to fire up our—a lot of our utilities and a time when we can sequester coal.

That's where we're headed for, but we've got to do something in the interim. Otherwise, we're going to be dealing, as the man said, with \$4 gasoline. And so that's why I'm against that bill.

I thank you. It's been a pleasure. Enjoyed being with you.

**Q.** Sir, do you think Hillary Clinton is the nominee?

**The President.** Pardon me?

**Q.** Do you still think Hillary Clinton will be the nominee?

**The President.** I'm not talking about politics.

**Q.** You've said that before, though.

**The President.** You're trying to get me to be pundit in chief.

**Q.** Are they qualified to be Commander in Chief?

**The President.** I appreciate you very—Jackson [David Jackson, USA Today]—Jackson. Nice to see you. [Laughter] Thank you.

**Q.** Thank you.

**The President.** Glad to see you back. [Laughter]

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:05 a.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates; Russian Presidential candidate Dmitry Medvedev; Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek of the Czech Republic; Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea; President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia; President Raul Castro Ruz and former President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba; Democratic Presidential candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Donald L. Evans, chairman, George W. Bush Presidential Library Foundation; and former factory worker and human rights activist Yang Chunlin, who was arrested on July 6, 2007, in China. Reporters referred to Republican Presidential candidate John

McCain; and former Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Adviser Frances Fragos Townsend. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

### **Remarks Following a Briefing on the National Economy**

*February 28, 2008*

I want to thank Madam Secretary for hosting this meeting with my economic team. We just had a briefing on what has become very obvious to the American people, that we're in a period of slowness. And it's also a period of uncertainty.

We're optimistic about the long-term economic future of the country, but right now a lot of Americans are facing uncertain times. And we're acting on it.

I want to thank the Members of Congress for quickly passing a economic growth package. And that means that there will be \$150 billion or more sent out to American consumers and incentives inherent in that to— for American businesses to invest.

Now, the Secretary briefed us—Secretary Paulson—that we anticipate that the checks will start being sent in the second week of May. And that's going to be very positive news for our consumers. And it's a part of our active plan to help deal with these uncertain times.

One way Congress, if they really want to make a substantial difference in creating certainty during uncertain times, is to make the tax cuts we passed permanent. You see, if you're somebody worried about \$3 gasoline and you think your taxes may be going up in 2 years, then it—the uncertain price of gasoline creates more uncertainty for you as you plan your future. And Congress needs to make these tax cuts permanent and needs to think about the American consumer and the American family and the American small-business owner during these times of difficulty and make the tax cuts permanent, send a clear signal to the American people.

Secondly, obviously, the housing issue is one that we're deeply concerned about. We want people being able to stay in their homes. We don't support legislation that will reward lenders, you know, that will bail out

lenders, and we don't support legislation that will cause interest rates to go up, like the legislation in the Senate. What we do support is an aggressive plan, led by Secretary Paulson and Secretary Jackson, to help people stay in their homes, to help them refinance their mortgages, to help them make the financial adjustments necessary to help us through this difficult period of time.

And so I want to thank you all for your briefing. I appreciate your concern about our fellow citizens. We share concerns about it. We want them doing well. And we believe that in the long term, we're going to do just fine. This is a resilient economy. We've got good, hard-working people in America. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong. And we'll make it through this period, just like we've made it through other periods of uncertainty during my Presidency. And each time, we came out stronger and better, and that's what's going to happen this time too.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:41 a.m. at the Department of Labor.

### **Proclamation 8221—American Red Cross Month, 2008**

*February 28, 2008*

*By the President of the United States of America*

#### **A Proclamation**

In 1881, Clara Barton established the American Red Cross, and for years afterward, she led that organization in its noble cause to provide healing, comfort, and hope to those in need. Today, her legacy lives on through the millions of individuals who have answered the timeless call to serve others. During American Red Cross Month, we honor this charitable organization, and we reflect on its remarkable achievements and contributions to our country.

The American Red Cross exemplifies the good heart of this Nation by leading humanitarian efforts at home and around the world. This past year the American Red Cross provided food, comfort, and medical assistance to the victims of the tragic bridge collapse in Minnesota, the devastating wildfires in

California, and the tornadoes that affected several Southern States. From the mountains of Peru to the lowlands of Bangladesh, the American Red Cross and its partners helped to provide relief abroad to those affected by natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies.

The American Red Cross also helps provide vital assistance by organizing blood drives, teaching health and safety programs, and providing lifesaving supplies. By compassionately supporting our men and women in uniform and their families, it helps to lift the spirits of our wounded warriors. During this month, we send our heartfelt gratitude to the volunteers and staff of the American Red Cross.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America and Honorary Chairman of the American Red Cross, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2008 as American Red Cross Month. I commend the dedicated efforts of the American Red Cross, and I encourage all Americans to help make our world a better place by volunteering their time, energy, and talents for others.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:58 a.m., February 29, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 3.

## **Proclamation 8222—Save Your Vision Week, 2008**

*February 28, 2008*

*By the President of the United States of America*

### **A Proclamation**

Early diagnosis and proper treatment of eye disease can help preserve the gift of

sight. During Save Your Vision Week, we encourage Americans to receive routine vision screenings and to understand the importance of keeping their eyes healthy and safe.

Today, millions of Americans live with some form of eye disease, such as glaucoma, corneal disease, macular degeneration, or diabetic eye disease. Individuals can help to avoid these diseases and maintain healthy eyes by following good eating habits, using appropriate protective eyewear, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Citizens should discuss with their physician the dangers of eye disease and see that their children are tested before their first year of school.

My Administration will continue to seek better ways to prevent and treat eye diseases. The National Eye Institute's website, [www.nei.nih.gov](http://www.nei.nih.gov), provides many resources to help Americans find information on eye disease and on where to find local eye-care professionals. By being proactive, Americans can help prevent vision loss and live healthier lives.

The Congress, by joint resolution approved December 30, 1963, as amended (77 Stat. 629; 36 U.S.C. 138), has authorized and requested the President to proclaim the first week in March of each year as "Save Your Vision Week."

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim March 2 through March 8, 2008, as Save Your Vision Week. I encourage all Americans to learn more about eye care and eye safety and to take measures to help ensure a lifetime of healthy vision.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:58 a.m., February 29, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on March 3.

**Memorandum on Waiver of  
Restriction on Providing Funds to  
the Palestinian Authority**

*February 28, 2008*

Presidential Determination No. 2008–13

*Memorandum for the Secretary of State*

*Subject:* Waiver of Restriction on Providing  
Funds to the Palestinian Authority

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 650(b) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2008 (Division J, Public Law 110–161) (the “Act”), I hereby certify that it is important to the national security interests of the United States to waive the provisions of section 650(a) of the Act, in order to provide funds appropriated to carry out chapter 4 of part II of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, to the Palestinian Authority.

You are directed to transmit this determination to the Congress, with a report pursuant to section 650(d) of the Act, and to publish the determination in the *Federal Register*.

**George W. Bush**

**Message to the Congress  
Transmitting the Denmark-United  
States Social Security Agreement**

*February 28, 2008*

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Pursuant to section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act, as amended by the Social Security Amendments of 1977 (Public Law 95–216, 42 U.S.C. 433(e)(1)), I transmit herewith the Agreement Between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Denmark on Social Security, which consists of two separate instruments: a principal agreement and an administrative arrangement. The agreement was signed at Copenhagen on June 13, 2007.

The United States-Denmark Agreement is similar in objective to the social security agreements already in force with Australia,

Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Such bilateral agreements provide for limited coordination between the United States and foreign social security systems to eliminate dual social security coverage and taxation, and to help prevent the loss of benefit protection that can occur when workers divide their careers between two countries. The United States-Denmark Agreement contains all provisions mandated by section 233 and other provisions that I deem appropriate to carry out the purposes of section 233, pursuant to section 233(c)(4).

I also transmit for the information of the Congress a report prepared by the Social Security Administration explaining the key points of the Agreement, along with a paragraph-by-paragraph explanation of the provisions of the principal agreement and the related administrative arrangement. Attached to this report is the report required by section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act, which describes the effect of the Agreement on income and expenditures of the U.S. Social Security program and the number of individuals affected by the Agreement.

I commend to the Congress the United States-Denmark Social Security Agreement and related documents.

**George W. Bush**

The White House,  
February 28, 2008.

**Remarks Following a Meeting With  
Secretary General Jakob Gijssbert  
“Jaap” de Hoop Scheffer of the  
North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

*February 29, 2008*

**President Bush.** It’s my honor to welcome the Secretary General of NATO back to the Oval Office. Last time I was with the Secretary General, I was trying to keep up with him on my mountain bike. He is a dear friend and a strong leader.

I appreciate the—Jaap, your helping to transform NATO so it deals with the threats

of the 21st century. You've done your job with great dignity and clarity of thought. And I'm looking forward to coming to Bucharest to support your efforts to make sure NATO is a relevant organization aimed at bringing security and peace to the world.

We've had a lot of things to discuss. A couple of key points—one, Afghanistan; the United States is committed to the NATO mission in Afghanistan. We're committed to a comprehensive strategy that helps folks in Afghanistan realize security, at the same time, economic prosperity and political progress.

Secondly, our hope is that nations that have applied to join NATO continue to meet their MAP obligations. And I'm looking forward to getting an assessment of the progress that these three nations have made, from you, before we take the vote on enlargement.

I appreciate very much NATO's role in helping to provide some sense of stability in the Balkans. Thank you for doing a training mission in Iraq. Overall, thanks for being a force for good. And I'm proud to welcome you back here.

**Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer.** Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you. Thank you, George.

Four working weeks until the Bucharest summit of NATO. I can echo the President's words. First of all, NATO's operations and missions—we have a long-term commitment vis-a-vis Afghanistan. I thank the President for the United States contribution in the NATO framework, which is an essential one. All 26 NATO allies are there, and we are there for the long haul. We are there to support President Karzai and the Afghan people. But we're also there because we're fighting terrorism, and we cannot afford to lose. We will not lose. We are not losing; we are prevailing.

May I mention Kosovo, which will be discussed. The secondary important NATO presence, 60,000 strong, to protect all Kosovars, majority, minority, Albanian, or Serb, so that also Kosovo will have a future.

NATO enlargement, the President mentioned. The nations concerned should go on with their reforms. No tickets are punched yet, but NATO enlargement will be on the agenda of the Bucharest summit, and cer-

tainly also what I call NATO finding the answers to modern threats and challenges, be it energy security and NATO's role as a bringer of added value. Cyber defense—we saw a huge cyber attack on Estonia not that long ago. Missile defense is certainly an issue.

So we have a real full calendar in Bucharest, and that is basically the calendar the President and I discussed. And I'm always very much enjoying the hospitality not only in the Oval but at the Crawford ranch as well.

Thank you very much.

**President Bush.** Thank you.

**Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer.** Thanks.

**President Bush.** Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:48 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan.

### **Statement on the Resignation of Donald E. Powell as Coordinator of Gulf Coast Region Recovery and Rebuilding**

*February 29, 2008*

Don Powell is an exceptional leader who has worked tirelessly and effectively to help the people of New Orleans and the gulf coast region recover and rebuild from one of our Nation's most destructive natural disasters.

Don brought to the job of coordinating our Federal rebuilding efforts the perfect combination of talent, temperament, experience, and compassion. Today, due in part to his leadership and outstanding work with State and local leaders, the gulf coast is on the road to recovery. While challenges remain, the region is open for business, critical infrastructure is being rebuilt, and schools are up and running. People are reclaiming their lives, and our Nation owes Don a debt of gratitude. I appreciate his service to the country and thank him for his dedication.

I am also grateful to Paul Conway, Don's chief of staff, who will assume the duties of the Federal Coordinator for the Office of Gulf Coast Rebuilding in the interim.

Laura and I wish Don well as he returns to Texas.



**Executive Order 13462—President’s Intelligence Advisory Board and Intelligence Oversight Board**

*February 29, 2008*

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

**Section 1. Policy.** It is the policy of the United States to ensure that the President and other officers of the United States with responsibility for the security of the Nation and the advancement of its interests have access to accurate, insightful, objective, and timely information concerning the capabilities, intentions, and activities of foreign powers.

**Sec. 2. Definitions.** As used in this order:

(a) “department concerned” means an executive department listed in section 101 of title 5, United States Code, that contains an organization listed in or designated pursuant to section 3(4) of the National Security Act of 1947, as amended (50 U.S.C. 401a(4));

(b) “intelligence activities” has the meaning specified in section 3.4 of Executive Order 12333 of December 4, 1981, as amended; and

(c) “intelligence community” means the organizations listed in or designated pursuant to section 3(4) of the National Security Act of 1947, as amended.

**Sec. 3. Establishment of the President’s Intelligence Advisory Board.** (a) There is hereby established, within the Executive Office of the President and exclusively to advise and assist the President as set forth in this order, the President’s Intelligence Advisory Board (PIAB).

(b) The PIAB shall consist of not more than 16 members appointed by the President from among individuals who are not employed by the Federal Government.

(c) The President shall designate a Chair from among the members of the PIAB, who shall convene and preside at meetings of the PIAB, determine its agenda, and direct its work.

(d) Members of the PIAB and the Intelligence Oversight Board (IOB) established in section 5 of this order:

(i) shall serve without any compensation for their work on the PIAB or the IOB; and

(ii) while engaged in the work of the PIAB or the IOB, may be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, as authorized by law for persons serving intermittently in the Government (5 U.S.C. 5701–5707).

(e) The PIAB shall utilize such full-time professional and administrative staff as authorized by the Chair and approved by the President or the President’s designee. Such staff shall be supervised by an Executive Director of the PIAB, appointed by the President, whom the President may designate to serve also as the Executive Director of the IOB.

**Sec. 4. Functions of the PIAB.** Consistent with the policy set forth in section 1 of this order, the PIAB shall have the authority to, as the PIAB determines appropriate, or shall, when directed by the President:

(a) assess the quality, quantity, and adequacy of intelligence collection, of analysis and estimates, and of counterintelligence and other intelligence activities, assess the adequacy of management, personnel and organization in the intelligence community, and review the performance of all agencies of the Federal Government that are engaged in the collection, evaluation, or production of intelligence or the execution of intelligence policy and report the results of such assessments or reviews:

(i) to the President, as necessary but not less than twice each year; and

(ii) to the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) and the heads of departments concerned when the PIAB determines appropriate; and

(b) consider and make appropriate recommendations to the President, the DNI, or the head of the department concerned with respect to matters identified to the PIAB by the DNI or the head of a department concerned.

**Sec. 5. Establishment of Intelligence Oversight Board.**

(a) There is hereby established a committee of the PIAB to be known as the Intelligence Oversight Board.

(b) The IOB shall consist of not more than five members of the PIAB who are designated by the President from among members of the PIAB to serve on the IOB. The IOB shall utilize such full-time professional and administrative staff as authorized by the Chair and approved by the President or the President's designee. Such staff shall be supervised by an Executive Director of the IOB, appointed by the President, whom the President may designate to serve also as the Executive Director of the PIAB.

(c) The President shall designate a Chair from among the members of the IOB, who shall convene and preside at meetings of the IOB, determine its agenda, and direct its work.

**Sec. 6. Functions of the IOB.** Consistent with the policy set forth in section 1 of this order, the IOB shall:

(a) issue criteria on the thresholds for reporting matters to the IOB, to the extent consistent with section 1.7(d) of Executive Order 12333 or the corresponding provision of any successor order;

(b) inform the President of intelligence activities that the IOB believes:

(i)(A) may be unlawful or contrary to Executive Order or presidential directive; and

(B) are not being adequately addressed by the Attorney General, the DNI, or the head of the department concerned; or

(ii) should be immediately reported to the President.

(c) review and assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and sufficiency of the processes by which the DNI and the heads of departments concerned perform their respective functions under this order and report thereon as necessary, together with any recommendations, to the President and, as appropriate, the DNI and the head of the department concerned;

(d) receive and review information submitted by the DNI under subsection 7(c) of this order and make recommendations thereon, including for any needed corrective action, with respect to such information, and the intelligence activities to which the information relates, as necessary, but not less than twice each year, to the President, the DNI, and the head of the department concerned; and

(e) conduct, or request that the DNI or the head of the department concerned, as appropriate, carry out and report to the IOB the results of, investigations of intelligence activities that the IOB determines are necessary to enable the IOB to carry out its functions under this order.

**Sec. 7. Functions of the Director of National Intelligence.** Consistent with the policy set forth in section 1 of this order, the DNI shall:

(a) with respect to guidelines applicable to organizations within the intelligence community that concern reporting of intelligence activities described in subsection 6(b)(i)(A) of this order:

(i) review and ensure that such guidelines are consistent with section 1.7(d) of Executive Order 12333, or a corresponding provision of any successor order, and this order; and

(ii) issue for incorporation in such guidelines instructions relating to the format and schedule of such reporting as necessary to implement this order;

(b) with respect to intelligence activities described in subsection 6(b)(i)(A) of this order:

(i) receive reports submitted to the IOB pursuant to section 1.7(d) of Executive Order 12333, or a corresponding provision of any successor order;

(ii) forward to the Attorney General information in such reports relating to such intelligence activities to the extent that such activities involve possible violations of Federal criminal laws or implicate the authority of the Attorney General unless the DNI or the head of the department concerned has previously provided such information to the Attorney General; and

(iii) monitor the intelligence community to ensure that the head of the department concerned has directed needed corrective actions and that such actions have been taken and report to the IOB and the head of the department concerned, and as appropriate the President, when such actions have not been timely taken; and

(c) submit to the IOB as necessary and no less than twice each year:

- (i) an analysis of the reports received under subsection (b)(i) of this section, including an assessment of the gravity, frequency, trends, and patterns of occurrences of intelligence activities described in subsection 6(b)(i)(A) of this order;
- (ii) a summary of direction under subsection (b)(iii) of this section and any related recommendations; and
- (iii) an assessment of the effectiveness of corrective action taken by the DNI or the head of the department concerned with respect to intelligence activities described in subsection 6(b)(i)(A) of this order.

**Sec. 8. Functions of Heads of Departments Concerned and Additional Functions of the Director of National Intelligence.**

(a) To the extent permitted by law, the DNI and the heads of departments concerned shall provide such information and assistance as the PIAB and the IOB may need to perform functions under this order.

(b) The heads of departments concerned shall:

- (i) ensure that the DNI receives:
  - (A) copies of reports submitted to the IOB pursuant to section 1.7(d) of Executive Order 12333, or a corresponding provision of any successor order; and
  - (B) such information and assistance as the DNI may need to perform functions under this order; and
- (ii) designate the offices within their respective organizations that shall submit reports to the IOB required by Executive Order and inform the DNI and the IOB of such designations; and
- (iii) ensure that departments concerned comply with instructions issued by the DNI under subsection 7(a)(ii) of this order.

(c) The head of a department concerned who does not implement a recommendation to that head of department from the PIAB under subsection 4(b) of this order or from the IOB under subsections 6(c) or 6(d) of this order shall promptly report through the DNI to the Board that made the recommendation, or to the President, the reasons for not implementing the recommendation.

(d) The DNI shall ensure that the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency performs the functions with respect to the Central Intelligence Agency under this order that a head of a department concerned performs with respect to organizations within the intelligence community that are part of that department.

**Sec. 9. References and Transition.** (a) References in Executive Orders other than this order, or in any other presidential guidance, to the “President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board” shall be deemed to be references to the President’s Intelligence Advisory Board established by this order.

(b) Individuals who are members of the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board under Executive Order 12863 of September 13, 1993, as amended, immediately prior to the signing of this order shall be members of the President’s Intelligence Advisory Board immediately upon the signing of this order, to serve as such consistent with this order until the date that is 15 months following the date of this order.

(c) Individuals who are members of the Intelligence Oversight Board under Executive Order 12863 immediately prior to the signing of this order shall be members of the Intelligence Oversight Board under this order, to serve as such consistent with this order until the date that is 15 months following the date of this order.

(d) The individual serving as Executive Director of the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board immediately prior to the signing of this order shall serve as the Executive Director of the PIAB until such person resigns, dies, or is removed, or upon appointment of a successor under this order and shall serve as the Executive Director of the IOB until an Executive Director of the IOB is appointed or designated under this order.

**Sec. 10. Revocation.** Executive Order 12863 is revoked.

**Sec. 11. General Provisions.**

(a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

- (i) authority granted by law to a department or agency, or the head thereof; or
- (ii) functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to

budget, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) Any person who is a member of the PIAB or IOB, or who is granted access to classified national security information in relation to the activities of the PIAB or the IOB, as a condition of access to such information, shall sign and comply with the agreements to protect such information from unauthorized disclosure. This order shall be implemented in a manner consistent with Executive Order 12958 of April 17, 1995, as amended, and Executive Order 12968 of August 2, 1995, as amended.

(c) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(d) This order is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch and is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity, by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

### George W. Bush

The White House,  
February 29, 2008.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:35 a.m., March 3, 2008]

NOTE: This Executive order will be published in the *Federal Register* on March 4.

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### Digest of Other White House Announcements

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The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

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#### February 23

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

#### February 24

In the evening, in the East Room, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted entertainment for the Nation's Governors.

#### February 25

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a briefing on the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives' "Quiet Revolution" report. Then, on the North Portico, he participated in a photo opportunity with the National Governors Association.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Bush will welcome King Abdullah II and Queen Rania of Jordan to the White House on March 4.

#### February 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he participated in an interview with April Ryan of American Urban Radio Networks.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel W. Sutherland to be Chairman of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ronald Daniel Rotunda and Francis X. Taylor to be members of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Nanci E. Langley to be Commissioner of the Postal Regulatory Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paul A. Schneider to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sheila McNamara Greenwood to be Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations).

The President announced his intention to nominate Kenneth E. Carfine and Edwin Eck to be members of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Joseph Torre as a member of the President's Cancer Panel.

**February 27**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Press Secretary Dana Perino, who informed him of the death of William F. Buckley, Jr.

The President announced that he has named Sonya E. Medina as Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy and Director of Projects for the First Lady.

The President announced that he has named Cynthia Stowe as Special Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Senior Director for Prevention Policy.

The President announced that he has named Alison Teal Young as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of the USA Freedom Corps.

**February 28**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

**February 29**

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had lunch with Secretary General Jakob Gijsbert “Jaap” de Hoop Scheffer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. He then traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, where he was joined by Mrs. Bush. Later, they welcomed Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen of Denmark and his wife, Anne-Mette Rasmussen, to the Bush Ranch.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Bush had dinner with Prime Minister Rasmussen and Mrs. Rasmussen.

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**Nominations  
Submitted to the Senate**


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The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

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**Submitted February 25**

Joseph A. Benkert, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Peter Cyril Wyche Flory, resigned.

Donald E. Booth, of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Zambia.

Carol Dillon Kissal, of Maryland, to be Inspector General, Small Business Administration, vice Eric M. Thorson.

Scot A. Marciel, of California, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Affairs.

Nancy E. McEldowney, of Florida, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Bulgaria.

Stephen George McFarland, of Texas, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Guatemala.

Gillian Arlette Milovanovic, of Pennsylvania, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Mali.

**Submitted February 26**

Kenneth E. Carfine, of Maryland, to be a member of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board for a term expiring September 21, 2010, vice Robert M. Tobias, term expired.

Peter E. Cianchette,  
of Maine, to be Ambassador Extraordinary  
and Plenipotentiary of the United States of  
America to the Republic of Costa Rica.

Colm F. Connolly,  
of Delaware, to be U.S. District Judge for  
the District of Delaware, vice Kent A. Jordan,  
elevated.

Edwin Eck,  
of Montana, to be a member of the Internal  
Revenue Service Oversight Board for a term  
expiring September 14, 2008, vice Karen  
Hastie Williams, term expired.

Sheila McNamara Greenwood,  
of Louisiana, to be an Assistant Secretary of  
Housing and Urban Development, vice Steven  
B. Nesmith, resigned.

Paul A. Schneider,  
of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of  
Homeland Security, vice Michael Jackson,  
resigned.

#### ***Withdrawn February 26***

Peter E. Cianchette,  
of Maine, to be a member of the Internal  
Revenue Service Oversight Board for a term  
expiring September 14, 2010, vice Nancy  
Killefer, term expired, which was sent to the  
Senate on January 9, 2007.

Stanley C. Suboleski,  
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of  
Energy (Fossil Energy), vice Jeffrey D.  
Jarrett, resigned, which was sent to the Senate  
on December 11, 2007.

Catherine G. West,  
of the District of Columbia, to be a member  
of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight  
Board for a term expiring September 14,  
2008, vice Karen Hastie Williams, term  
expired, which was sent to the Senate on January  
9, 2007.

#### ***Submitted February 27***

Nanci E. Langley,  
of Virginia, to be a Commissioner of the Postal  
Regulatory Commission for a term expiring  
November 22, 2012, vice Dawn A. Tisdale,  
term expired.

Ronald D. Rotunda,  
of Virginia, to be a member of the Privacy  
and Civil Liberties Oversight Board for a  
term of 4 years expiring January 29, 2012  
(new position).

Daniel W. Sutherland,  
of Virginia, to be Chairman of the Privacy  
and Civil Liberties Oversight Board for a  
term of 6 years expiring January 29, 2014  
(new position).

Francis X. Taylor,  
of Maryland, to be a member of the Privacy  
and Civil Liberties Oversight Board for a  
term of 2 years expiring January 29, 2010  
(new position).

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### **Checklist of White House Press Releases**

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The following list contains releases of the Office  
of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as  
items nor covered by entries in the Digest of  
Other White House Announcements.

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#### ***Released February 25***

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary  
Dana Perino

Statement by the Press Secretary on House  
of Representatives action on intelligence reform  
legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit of  
King Abdullah II and Queen Rania of Jordan  
to the White House

Statement by the Press Secretary: Call for  
Release of Belarusian Political Prisoner Aleksandr  
Kozulin

Fact sheet: The Quiet Revolution: A Seven-Year  
Progress Report

#### ***Released February 26***

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary  
Dana Perino

Transcript of a press briefing by senior administration  
officials on intelligence reform legislation

Statement by the Press Secretary on the housing market

Fact sheet: Free Trade Agreements Vital to U.S. Economic Growth and National Security

***Released February 27***

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino

***Released February 28***

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1216 and H.R. 5270

***Released February 29***

Transcript of a press gaggle by National Security Council Press Secretary Gordon Johndroe

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President signing legislation to extend the Andean Trade Preference Act

Statement by the Press Secretary on the resignation of Timothy Goeglein as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Public Liaison

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 5264 and H.R. 5478

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**Acts Approved  
by the President**

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***Approved February 28***

H.R. 1216 / Public Law 110–189  
Cameron Gulbransen Kids Transportation Safety Act of 2007

H.R. 5270 / Public Law 110–190  
Airport and Airway Extension Act of 2008

***Approved February 29***

H.R. 5264 / Public Law 110–191  
Andean Trade Preference Extension Act of 2008

H.R. 5478 / Public Law 110–192  
To provide for the continued minting and issuance of certain \$1 coins in 2008